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EGIDIO GIANNINI - FIRENZE

ECHOES
OF
OLD FLORENCE.

Bertha D. Ioper,
ECHOES Florence, 62.

OF

OLD FLORENCE

HER PALACES AND THOSE
WHO HAVE LIVED IN THEM

BY

LEADER SCOTT

Honorary Member
of the Accademia delle Belle Arti di Firenze,
Author of *A nook in the Appennines - Renaissance of Art in Italy*
Tuscan Studies - Handbook of Sculpture, &c.

SECOND EDITION
WITH A NEW CHAPTER

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PREFACE

These echoes of old Florence are intended to reach the ears of the dwellers and sojourners in new Florence, and to give them a change of study on the subject of its streets and houses.

The art of Florence, its tangible antiquities, and its scenic beauties, have been written and studied till they are perfectly familiar to every tourist. But I believe no one has thought of recalling the human interest of those quaint streets now fast disappearing; and peopling the old houses whose solid stones still remain, with the very inhabitants who lived in them centuries ago;—the honest old burghers who were such good haters, and used their weapons as often as their tools; the gay young cavaliers who rode to a joust or a skirmish with equal *gusto*; the richly clad dames who caused all the great tragedies; the pallid saints and nuns who fled from the turmoil of life; and the Popes, Kings, Lords, etc., who appeared as guests among them.

I have here attempted to render all these visible to English eyes, calling them forth from the pages of old chroniclers and *novellieri*. In no case have I invented a single episode, or even a speech; I have but anglicised the old storyteller's quaint italian.

For the historical part I have drawn largely from Dino Compagni, who writes only of events he saw enacted; from old Giovanni Villani, who, though he may romance about what took place before his era, is a capital reporter of his own times; from a MS. Priorista in my own possession written by Stefano Cambi, one of the Priors in 1527; from Padre Ildefonso, Mecatti, Capponi, Machiavelli, and Nardi.

The *novellieri* I have made use of are chiefly Sacchetti, who wrote about A.D. 1360, Manni's *Veglie Piacevoli*, etc.

Del Rosso's *Osservatore Fiorentino* has also been of inestimable use.

INTRODUCTION

MARS AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

..... "Tell me of the fold,
That hath Saint John for guardian, what was then
Its state, and who in it were highest seated!"
As embers, at the breathing of the wind,
Their flame enliven; so that light I saw
Shine at my blandishments; and, as it grew
More fair to look on, so with voice more sweet,
Yet not in this our modern phrase, forthwith
It answer'd: "From the day, when it was said
"Hail Virgin!" to the throes by which my mother,
Who now is sainted, lighten'd her of me
Whom she was heavy with, this fire had come
Five hundred times and fourscore, to relume
Its radiance underneath the burning foot
Of its own lion. They of whom I sprang,
And I, had there our birth-place, where the last
Partition of our city first is reach'd
By him that runs her annual game."

Parad., Canto XVI, v. 23-40.

We will not begin our chronicles as old Giovanni Villani does, from the tower of Babel; nor even from King Atlas or Attalus fifth in descent from Japhet, who with his wife Electra, a descendant of Shem, is supposed to have come over from Africa and founded Fiesole.

We may even pass over as fabulous the story that the god Mars advised his son Dardanus to emigrate,

and found the city of Troy, leaving his brother Italus to give his name to Italy. Villani does not know whether the war-god were led in this by "divine commission or diabolic artifice;" probably the latter, for he certainly got a large amount of fighting out of the arrangement on both sides.

These echoes are too far off, and deceptive for us. It is enough to know that Fiesole was an Etruscan city centuries before Romulus ploughed the circuit of his walls, and had to employ Etruscan architects to build them, and Etruscan statesmen to make his laws.

The two nations soon became rivals; for it was still 500 years before Christ, when Lars Porsenna led his victorious armies to Rome. The constant Etruscan wars ended at length in the subjugation of the twelve cities by Rome, and they unwillingly bore her yoke till B. C. 66, when Catiline fled to Etruria after Cicero's exposure of him, and incited the people of Fiesole to rebellion.¹

This brought down on them the Consuls Caius Antonius, and Publius Petreius, with a host of Romans, and Quintus Metellus was recalled from Gaul to reinforce them.

Hearing of these measureless forces advancing against Fiesole, Catiline, the traitor, thought to escape to Gaul and avoid meeting them, leaving to their fate the Fiesolans who had sheltered him. This is said to be the occasion when he resorted to that puerile device of reversing the shoes of his horses so that the Romans might take the footprints of the fugitives for those of a

¹ See Cicero's 1st oration against Catiline, where he speaks of Catiline being assisted by men in Sylla's colony of Fiesole.



1053 FIRENZE MERCATO VECCHIO

CIANNINI - FIRENZE

relief column marching up to Fiesole. The ruse did not answer; he was followed, and overtaken in the Val d'Arno, where the famous pitched battle ensued, in which Catiline was killed. The remnant of Catiline's army built themselves huts near the battle field, and founded Pistoja.

Metellus soon after came down from Lombardy, and marched to besiege Fiesole, the people of which made a spirited sally, and drove the Romans down to the banks of the Arno, where they pitched their camp. Here again we are met by a host of conflicting legends. Some say there was already a Roman colony on the Arno founded by Sylla; others that the Triumvirs founded it, and this is borne out by Livy and Lucius Florus. So we had better pin our faith to Livy, and ignore Villani's account of a six year's siege during which gallant little Fiesole with her belt of cyclopean walls held out against the whole Roman host; the great Cæsar himself being one of the leaders,¹ and Camertus another.

Any way it is certain that there existed a Roman colony on the banks of the Arno, and whether it were named Florentia from Fiorino, one of its commanders,² or from Fluentia, a river, or from the flowers on the banks, does not much matter. It soon took rank as a

¹ Villani (lib. I, cap. 36) says that Monte Cesari or Ceceri, where the stone quarries are, was named from Cæsar, and that Camerata just above the Roman camp was named from Camertus.

² When the Romans raised the siege, and withdrew, they left Fiorino a centurion in the camp by the Arno, and he harassed the Fiesolans for a long time. At length they made a sally by night and killed him, his wife and children in their tents, and set fire to the camp. This brought the Roman host back in full force to avenge Fiorino, and the field where they pitched their camp was named, from that day, the field of Mars; and a "*Campo di Marte*" is, on the same site, after 18 centuries.

complete Roman city under the protection of Mars, whose circular temple is now the Baptistery. Its forum stood where the old market used to be; the site of its baths is now indicated by the Via delle Terme; its theatre is said to have been in the circular space where the Croce al Trebbio stands; and the Peruzzi have built their palace over the remains of its amphitheatre.

The Campidoglio or fortress, with its piazza, was near the old market. Remains of its massive walls were till lately to be seen in the Piazzetta della Luna, near the church which for ages was called S^{ta} Maria in Campidoglio. The Roman legion quartered here was of the Tribù Scaptia and in the course of time its ranks included several Florentines. There was an A. Catinta of the Prætorian cohort in the time of Antonine, and a Q. Tersina Lupus in the reign of Commodus.¹

Though under Roman laws, and nominally pagan, Florence soon became imbued with Christian tenets, and during the time of transition the tragedies of persecution were frequently acted here. The figures of several interesting saints and martyrs stand out in full relief on the pages of its early history, like saints upon a church façade. San Miniato, St. Ambrose, San Zanobi, and San Giovanni Gualberto, form a remarkable group.

The change to Christianity seems to have been gradual; so much so that the same or similar forms and customs were carried on in the same temples long after they became christian. Some have indeed lingered till now, such as the "Scoppio del carro," a remnant of the

¹ A very interesting cippus, commemorative of this soldier is preserved by Comm. J. Temple Leader in his castle of Vincigliata.



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ancient distribution of fire from the central altar to the household hearth; and the Ascension day “culto” of the “*grillo*,” which I believe, came from the Etruscan “*scarabeus*.”

As long as Paganism ruled supreme, Mars was the guardian deity of the city, and the Christians only met in secret places such as hermitages and caverns outside the walls. But in the time of Constantine and Pope Sylvester, the faithful were able to throw off the veil of secrecy, and worship God in the light of day. Their numbers increased, and the pagans decreased till the temples of the gods were almost neglected. Then the Florentines thought it time to dedicate the finest building they had to the service of the true God, and Mars was deposed from his pedestal in the circular temple. But though he was no longer a god to be worshipped, the semi-converted Florentines dared not offer the war-god any indignities; for the astrologers said “the consecration of the city to Mars took place at such a conjunction of planets, that if his statue were broken, cast down, or not respected, the god would avenge himself on Florence by sending it untold misfortunes and endless strife.” So the statue was placed as guardian of the city on a tower near the river, and though the citizens worshipped St. John Baptist, they had a respect not untinged with awe, for their pagan patron Mars.

A grand consecration of the quondam temple of Mars as a Christian Church dedicated to St. John Baptist took place in the 4th century. It was called the Duomo, and in it was placed the Christian font, where children were baptized, and where the people came on Easter Eve to take the holy water. Moreover the sa-

cred fire was kept there, and on Easter Saturday every householder went to light his lamp or torch for the household shrine. It happened that a certain Messer Pazzo, a very large and strong man, carried a bigger torch than any one else, and it became a custom for many people to take their light from his, till it became a privilege for the Pazzi family to supply the fire for the Easter ceremony.¹

At that time there was no apse to the Baptistery, nor had it a roof, for the statue of Mars stood in the centre exposed to the sun. The church was covered in about the year 1150, and a century after that, the Pisani coated all the pretty arches with a marble covering. The transformation of the temple to the church was not accomplished without the persecution and martyrdom which seemed in those ages the inevitable beginnings of Christianity. Even in the days of Nero, Florence had its martyrs; but the persecution which presents most historical incident was that of Decius, A. D. 252, and this brings us to our first story; for Christianity may be said to have been planted in Florence by San Miniato.

¹ This story of Villani's (lib. I, cap. 40) accounts much more credibly for the connection of the Pazzi with the "Scoppio del Carro" of Easter Saturday, than the popular legend of Messer Pazzo riding from Jerusalem seated backwards on his horse with a light in his hand, or that he brought a holy stone from the Sepulchre, from which the Easter light was struck for the Carro. Villani's words are "they ordained that the sacred fire should be dispersed through the city in the way they do in Jerusalem." The whole ceremony has a strong spice of paganism, and no doubt the Florentine Christians had lighted their household altars from that of Mars in this very Church, and had merely kept up old customs giving a new significance to them.

I.

STORY OF THE HILL OF SAN MINIATO

(A. D. 250-400)

The picturesque height of San Miniato, now the great cemetery of the city, which dominates the Arno from the South, has an especial religious and saintly interest. The grand basilica with its glittering ancient mosaic, shines amidst the cypresses against the sky, and whether it gleams in the sunlight against the blue, or is cut in black on the primrose sky of twilight, it is equally imposing.

Its history begins with the martyrs of the 3rd century. The first oratory which stood there was replaced by a church, the gift of Charlemagne; and this was improved in the 11th century by Bishop Hildebrand and the Emperor Henry II. The steep ascent with its seven crosses is known as the Monte delle Croci, and here the devout who come to mourn their dead on All Souls day, pass from station to station following with prayers Christ's path of suffering. Half way up this cross-strewn road, is a shrine commemorative of the saintly episode which led San Giovanni Gualberto to found the Val-lombrosan order of monks, an episode which we here relate.

The solemn remoteness of this medieval Via Crucis is now destroyed. Utility has trodden out sanctity. A wide and commodious stone stairway makes the foot pilgrimage easy, while a magnificent drive and tramway render any kind of pilgrimage unnecessary.

FLORENTINE SAINTS AND MARTYRS

. As to ascend
 That steep, upon whose brow the chapel stands,
 (O'er Rubaconte, looking lordly down
 On the well guided city,) up the right
 The impetuous rise is broken by the steps
 Carved in that old and simple age, when still
 The registry and label rested safe :
 Thus is the acclivity relieved.

Purg., Canto XII, v. 93-100.

Florence being a Roman city was sometimes taken as a resting place by the Emperors when they journeyed among their provinces; and as such it was used by Decius in A. D. 251. He was a furious antichristian, and while staying in the city he heard of a certain holy Hermit named Miniatus, who with his disciples lived in a forest called *Arisgotto* on a hill above the Arno, where the Church of San Miniato now stands.

The Hermit was said to be the son of an Armenian King. He had given up his Kingdom for Christ's sake, and crossing the seas had extended his pilgrimage to Florence, where he chose this solitary wood on the heights opposite the city as his retreat. At that time the city did not extend across the river, which was spanned by only one small bridge towards Fiesole.

The blessed Miniatus being one day in his hermitage,

was surprised by a deputation from the Emperor Decius, commanding him to the Imperial presence. At first Decius treated the holy man with the courtesy due to the son of a King; he presented gifts to him, promising him great wealth and honours if he would renounce Christianity. The faithful Miniatus refused to do this, and renounced both gifts and honours, rather than deny Christ.

Decius then cast off the veil of fair speaking, and Miniatus was put to the torture in various ways, but always refused to recant, till Decius at length ordered his head to be cut off, together with those of several of his disciples. This massacre took place without the walls, near the spot on which Porta alla Croce now stands. The disciples were beheaded and buried, but we are told by a plurality of veracious chroniclers, that Miniatus, by a miracle of Christ, took up his head with his own hands, and replacing it on his shoulders walked across the Arno, and ascended the hill to his cell, where in solitude he rendered his soul to the Lord. He was secretly buried by his disciples in a small Oratory dedicated to St. Peter, where many of the earlier martyrs had been interred.

The grand marble Church which now marks the sacred spot was not begun till April 20th 1013, under Alibrand Bishop of Florence, by royal decree of the Emperor Henry II of Bavaria, and his wife Cunegond. This Royal couple richly endowed the Church "for the good of their souls." The body of the blessed Miniatus, now "San Miniato," was removed from the little Oratory to the altar of the marble Church, and the ceremony of his translation made a grand day

for Florence. The Bishops and Clergy formed a solemn procession, and all the people, both men and women, came up the hill to see the gorgeous ceremonies.

Probably the dignitaries of the Commune found the ascent fatiguing, for they finished the Emperor's work by making the Via Crucis, with the stone steps, of which Dante speaks. This being done, they gave the Church and its steps into the care of the Consuls of the *Arte di Calimara* (Wool staplers).

After the miraculous San Miniato we are not surprised to hear that wonder-working saints were often connected with Florence. In A. D. 393 St. Ambrose came from Milano to consecrate the Basilica of San Lorenzo, lately built by a rich and pious lady named Giuliana. He presented to the altar of the Church some precious relics, such as the bodies of the holy martyrs Vitale and Agricola, which he had found in the Jewish cemetery at Bologna! He advised the lady Giuliana as to the education of her three children, and dedicated the new Church to San Lorenzo, that her little son might always be reminded of his saintly namesake. It is said that while here, St. Ambrose lodged in the house of a good woman named Pansofia, who, though wife of a Consul, was a faithful Christian. Her child dying while he was under her roof, Pansofia appealed to the holy man as the Shunamite woman did to Elijah, and he resuscitated the boy. So much did gentle St. Ambrose win all hearts, that on his departure the Florentines besought his promise that he would visit them again; a promise which he solemnly made, and mystically kept.





NO. 755421 LUNTON CHURCH OF S. MARTIN
EGIDIO GIANNINI FIRENZE

The following year St. Ambrose's friend Zanolius was consecrated Bishop of Florence, Theodosius being Emperor at the time; and the Florentine Zanolius eclipsed the Milanese Ambrose in the wonder and greatness of his miracles. Perhaps in the marvellous second visit of St. Ambrose his mantle fell on his friend Zanolius.

It is true the Milanese priest had died before he could return, but it is not likely a saint would break his promise for such a slight occurrence as that. His advent took place in this wise. We are told that Bishop Zanolius was one day celebrating mass in his Cathedral of San Lorenzo when St. Ambrose suddenly appeared at the high altar and embraced him, much to the content of the populace, who beheld and recognised Ambrose.

After this Zanolius' miraculous power shewed itself. One day while walking down the Borgo degli Albizi (if you will look on the wall of the Palazzo Altoviti, you will see an inscription marking the exact spot) San Zanobi, as the Italians call him, met a lady from Gaul who was on a pilgrimage with her little son. The boy had died before her holy errand was accomplished, and the mother was weeping beside the bier, as it was carried to the grave. San Zanobi caused the bier to be set down, and by his prayers and laying on of hands, brought the child back to life again.¹

It was in San Zanobi's time that the great Church

¹ This scene has been sculptured in bronze by Ghiberti on the Bishop's tomb in the Duomo, and painted in glowing colours by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio. The picture is in the Tuscan room of the Uffizi.

of Santa Reparata, now the Duomo, was commenced by many devout citizens as a thank-offering for a victory which Stilicho obtained over Radagaisus the Goth at Fiesole.¹ As the victory took place on October 8th, the day sacred to the virgin martyr Reparata, the new Church was dedicated to her. This was in future to be San Zanobi's Metropolitan Church, and here, when the good old Bishop died on January 25th 409, his body was carried for its funeral obsequies.

Before the Church there stood an elm tree, dried and withered, and as the bier of the saint touched its bark in passing, the dead tree came to life and blossomed. Now if anyone should find this hard to believe, they have only to look on the marble column which the devout citizens placed, in commemoration of the very spot in the Piazza del Duomo, and they will see a bronze tree on it, with the whole story written in imperishable gothic letters. Zanobius was a Greek, of the family of Girolami, who had their home in what afterwards became the Lambertesca palace in Por Santa Maria. In republican times the members of that family had the privilege of offering their gifts at the shrine of San Zanobi on his fête day, in precedence even of the Signoria and dignitaries of the Commune. The shrine is still visible on the corner of the old Lambertesca palace, and a fresh wreath is placed round it every year.

As we are on the subject of Florentine Saints, we may

¹ In a *podere* at Fiesole belonging to Comm. Temple Leader an interesting discovery was lately made of a number of skeletons in rough stone cists, with gothic ornaments among the bones. They were supposed to be Goths killed in this war.

as well give here a strange legend of the Via Crucis on the hill of San Miniato; a legend which has all the characteristics of an age of mixed chivalry, and monkhood. It was in the time of the Emperor Henry III, somewhere about 1060, when the young knight Giovanni Gualberto, Lord of Petrolo in Val di Pesa, came into Florence with a company of armed followers. Of course being a feudal Lord, he had an hereditary enemy in his next neighbour, whose life he had sworn to take whenever they should meet, in revenge for the death of his brother by the enemy's hand.

One day as the knight and his band were riding up the hill of San Miniato, they came face to face with this life-long foe in the narrow road. That personage seeing himself likely to be overpowered, thought it well to follow a humble policy. He threw himself on his knees at the feet of the cavalier Gualberto, and extending his arms in the form of a cross, cried for "mercy in the name of the cross of Jesus Christ."

Now on hearing this name Giovanni Gualberto's heart "was by God so stirred to mercy of his enemy, that he forthwith pardoned him," and they went together to offer their vows before the Crucifix in the Church close by.

Here God manifested his approval of the pardon by a miracle, which was beheld by both the knights and all their followers. The Christ on the cross distinctly bowed his head in sign of approbation! This so impressed the knight Gualberto, that from that day he cast away his sword, and vowed to serve the cross alone. He took the vows and habit of St. Francis in the monastery of San Miniato, but finding that the Abbot was

not holy or severe enough to suit him, he left the convent, and went to the further hill of Vallombrosa, where he lived the life of a hermit, in the service of Christ. He grew so much in grace that he won the reputation of being a saintly man; disciples came to him, and at length his little group of hermits so increased, that the convent and order of Servite monks were founded. Giovanni Gualberto lived several years as its Abbot, and even during life, he gained some fame for his miracles. He was approved of as a man of orthodox faith, by the Popes Stephen IX, and Gregory VII; and when he died was buried at the Abbey of Passignano, near Florence, which he had founded in 1073. After his death Pope Gregory, with solemn ceremonies, canonized him.

II.

THE CITY OF FOUR GATES

(A. D. 407-1100)

The Florence of four gates was walled in by Charlemagne, and circumscribed the space contained within the Borgo dei Greci, the Badia, the Canto dei Pazzi, Via dei Servi, Borgo San Lorenzo, San Gaetano, and Porta Rossa. This small space sufficed till 1077, when a second circuit was made to protect the city from the threatened invasion of Henry IV, then at daggers drawn with Countess Matilda and Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII). The new radius extended to Porta Pinti, Piazza Santa Croce, Lung'Arno and Via del Moro, etc.

The third circuit was built in 1284 and was almost on the lines now marked out by the remains of gates and the wide Viali. These walls were abolished when the kingdom was formed, being judged an anomaly in modern life.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE REPUBLIC
AN INTERLUDE

(TO BE READ OR SKIPPED AD LIB.)

. In that city I dwelt
Who for the Baptist her first patron changed,
Whence he for this shall cease not with his art
To work her woe; and if there still remain'd not
On Arno's passage some faint glimpse of him,
Those citizens, who rear'd once more her walls
Upon the ashes left by Attila.
Had labour'd without profit of their toil.

Inf., Canto XIII, c. 144-151.

After the Saints I have spoken of, the figures which stand out most in Florentine story are less saintly and more martial. Stilicho's victory availed little. Alaric the Goth came to Italy in 407 with 200,000 men. Rome was sacked, and Florence subdued; and though a century later we find Belisarius making a prisoner of King Vitiges, the Goths held fast, till in 541 Totila ruled Italy, and influenced the fortunes of Florence. Some historians say the city surrendered itself to him by fair contract, but old Villani gives a heartrending account of the utter and entire destruction of the city and its inhabitants, saying "they left not one of the towers that Cneius Pompey had built, nor a gate in the walls either north or south, nor a house except the Duomo, which had been the house of Mars; and which never has been destroyed, nor ever shall be to the end of time, except at the day of judgment, for so it is

written in the "smalto" (enamel) of the temple. And the idol which the Florentines had taken away from his temple, and placed on a tower, fell into the Arno, and there it stayed as long as the city was undome. Thus was the noble city of Florence destroyed by that cursed "Scourge of the Lord"¹ on the 28th day of June in the year of Christ 540; i. e. 520 years from its primal building; and in the city the blessed Maurice Bishop of Florence died in great torment by reason of the barbarities of Totila's men, and his body lies in Santa Reparata."

This is a very picturesque story indeed, and we should prefer to believe it rather than that Florence sold herself to Totila.

After the Goths came the Lombards, and a long line of Dukes, such as Alboin, Agilulf, Gundebert, Luitprand, etc., governed the land till Desiderius the last of them held his court at Florence. In 770 great Charlemagne came on the scene, turned out Desiderius and all his fair-haired warriors, after which he paid that well known state visit to Pope Adrian in Rome.

It is said that Charlemagne caused Florence to be rebuilt, but as within 15 years, we find him making a royal visit to a well established town, we must believe that a town of some sort existed when he first came.

In Charlemagne's time the city had four gates. The eastern Porta San Piero, near where the Pazzi palace now stands; the north Porta del Duomo or the "Bishop's gate;" the western that of San Pancrazio, where the Church of that name stands (it was then just outside

¹ Old Villani has evidently endowed Totila with the unenviable name earned a century before by Attila.

the walls); and the south gate of Porta Santa Maria, near where the old bridge was afterwards built. Besides these, there were seven posterns, one of which was the Porta Rossa. A very small city indeed was Florence in those days.

Where Charlemagne comes in, he brings an air of chivalry with him. In 805, a few years after his coronation at Rome by Pope Leo, we find him keeping the Easter feast at Florence. After assisting at the benediction by water and by fire in the Baptistery, he created an order of chivalry; knighting members of the families of Fifanti, Uberti, Lamberti, Tedaldi, Visdomini, Pilli and others, thereby unwittingly sowing the seeds of future warfare by creating a class of nobles in a burgher city. In a couple of centuries the descendants of Charlemagne's cavaliers had become the overbearing "*grandi*," the Ghibelline partizans of the Emperor against the Church. Before this visit Charlemagne had lost his wife Hildegard, and in memory of her he made rich gifts to the Church of San Miniato, and founded that of Sant'Apostoli. Moreover he pronounced the city and its outskirts for three miles round, a free Commune, subject only to a nominal yearly tax. He established the government under two consuls, and a council of 100 Senators, and in fact made life in Florence so advantageous that many families were induced to live within its walls, and build and augment the town.

This freedom did not long continue, for his son Louis the Pious, sent Imperial letters declaring all the cities of Tuscany to be subject to the Roman Empire, i. e. his own power. He created one of his knights Adal-

bert, Marquis of Tuscany, and another named Boniface, Count of Lucca.

There are several romantic episodes about the Marquisate of Tuscany, which lasted for a couple of centuries. For instance, a certain Conte Ugo (Hugh) was converted from his evil and worldly ways by a miracle. One day while hunting at Buonsollazzo, he lost his way in a vast forest, and led by the sound of ringing hammers he came to a forge where men of terrible aspect were hammering on their anvils, not red hot iron, but human beings. The terrified Count demanded the reason, and was told they were "punishing the souls of the damned, and that if he did not speedily change his ways, he would soon find himself under the same treatment." Accordingly Count Hugh began founding Abbeys and Monasteries, in Lucca and Arezzo, and gave large benefices to the Badia of Florence. He gave six families of Florence the privilege of bearing his arms—Argent; four pallets, gules.

His brother Boniface went to the East where the daughter of the Emperor fell in love with him. He was a graceful, amiable young man, invincible in arms, and endowed with all good gifts. He not being of royal race, the Princess dared not let him openly ask her hand, but preferred marrying secretly; so taking her jewels and money they fled to Lombardy. "The Emperor sent through the world to find her," so runs the ancient chronicle, "and having found her, commanded her instant return, promising her a King for a husband." But the Princess replied that, "she would have neither King nor spouse but he whom she had chosen."

The Emperor wisely accepted the inevitable, and ratified the marriage, sending her enough dowry to purchase a worthy estate. The young couple bought three adjoining castles and towns, and then rebuilt the house of Canossa, which belonged to Boniface, "making it," says Villani, "a fortress so strong that it could never be vanquished." This was the fort, the gate of which Matilda afterwards shut against the Emperor Henry IV.

From 945 the line of Tuscany had mingled with that of Hatto, Count of Parma and Canossa, through whom it in time descended to the famous Countess Matilda. With her begins the real history of the Florentine Republic, she being the last reigning sovereign. A grand figure of a woman is that of the indomitable Countess Matilda, forming the centre of a group which stands out in strong relief from the back ground of the middle ages:—the Pope, the Emperor, and the woman who secured the former on his throne, and held the latter at bay, condescending to hold out the hand of friendship to him when he was sufficiently humbled.

Perhaps Matilda's mother Beatrice is more intimately connected with Florence itself, as she was regent here for her son, whereas Matilda's life was passed more at Lucca and in Lombardy. The Countess Beatrice was a daughter of Frederick Duke of Lorraine who married a second Duke Boniface.

He, in due time, succeeded to the throne of Tuscany, and leaving Canossa he held court in what is now the Archbishop's palace in Florence.

Under him the Florentines, who since Charle-

magne's time had been at feud with Fiesole, subjugated it by a ruse. On the day of St. Romolo, when the Fiesolans held festa, several gay young Florentines went up ostensibly to join the festivities, but in reality to open the gates to their army which had marched secretly up the hill by night, and were in ambush near. The fête became a fight, the Fiesolans were beaten (except a few who got into the Keep and held it) and their houses destroyed; only the Cathedral was left standing, and whole families were compelled to go down to Florence, and become citizens. As a trophy the Florentines carried off the marble Carroccio, which they set up in their Church of San Piero Scheraggio as a memorial.

In 1052 Boniface was killed by two exiles who shot arrows at him from the banks of the Oglio near Cremona, and Beatrice became regent for her son; also a Boniface. An ancient chronicler gives us a picture of her as sitting on a throne in the Vesco-vado, with a long wand of justice, hearing cases, and giving judgment with a wave of her wand. There remains proof of her adjudging some property to the Badia in 1061, and again of Pope Alexander II, and Flaubert minister of the French King, taking oath before her respecting some property belonging to the Church of San Miniato.

Her little son died in childhood, and Beatrice, feeling the need of a protector, married "Godfrey the bearded," Duke of Lorraine; giving her daughter Matilda to his son "Godfrey il Gobbo." Thus while Beatrice held court in Florence, Matilda did the same at Lucca. In 1074 we find Beatrice then

a widow, associated with Matilda in the government, and they attended together the council of Rome in 1074, when the Emperor Henry IV was excommunicated, and the subject of the celibacy of the priests was discussed. In the reigns of this remarkable mother and daughter, the walls of Florence were enlarged, and the city much embellished. There was now a quarter across the river, which two bridges spanned, the Ponte Vecchio, and the Ponte alla Carraia.

In 1076 Beatrice died, and Matilda was seldom in Florence, having enough to do in holding Lucca in hand, and helping Gregory VII in his bitter feud with Henry IV. She was immensely powerful, holding feudal territories nearly all over Lombardy, Tuscany and the Romagna.

After the death of her friend Pope Gregory, she devoted herself to founding churches, and endowing monasteries. She gave up fighting, and turned her fortress of Canossa into a convent of nuns.

She died in 1115, and though Conrad her nephew is sometimes named as Marquis of Tuscany, it is doubtful if he ever really reigned, for we find the communal statutes date from about this time. The ancient form of two consuls and a council was at first adopted, but this in time became modified into the finest republican government that ever existed.

Having given this shadowy sketch of the evolution of Florence, we will proceed to tell our promised stories.





III.

THE STORY OF PALAZZO BUONDELMONTE

(A. D. 1218)

The Palazzo Buondelmonte stands on the Piazza Santa Trinità, next to the Hotel du Nord. It was once familiar to English visitors, who often toiled up its steep steps to Vieusseux's library, before that boon to the public was removed to its more commodious site in Palazzo Ferroni. In its present state Palazzo Buondelmonte bears the impress of the 15th century architecture, though many historians, such as Biadi (*Antiche Fabbriche di Firenze*, p. 220), De Burgo, etc., say it dates two centuries earlier, and was the veritable abode of that Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti, whose tragic love story was the beginning of the factional wars between Guelphs and Ghibellines.

THE LOVES OF THE BUONDELMONTI

O Buondelmonte! What ill counseling
 Prevail'd on thee to break the plighted bond?
 Many, who now are weeping, would rejoice,
 Had God to Ema given thee, the first time
 Thou near our city camest. But so 'twas doom'd;
 Florence! on that maim'd stone¹ which guards the bridge,
 The victim, when thy peace departed, fell.
 "With these and others like to them, I saw
 Florence in such assured tranquillity,
 She had no cause at which to grieve: with these
 Saw her so glorious and so just, that ne'er
 The lily from the lance had hung reverse,
 Or through division been with vermeil dyed."

Parad., Canto XVI, v. 140-152.

I.

In spite of Dante's crediting Buondelmonte with being the primary cause of Florentine factions, it is certain that there were adverse parties in the city before his time, and that the Uberti were much hated by other families for their over-bearing harshness.

In early medieval times the Buondelmonti were

¹ The stone referred to, was an ancient statue of Mars, which, as we have said, had once been the guardian genius of Florence. After the conversion of the Florentines to Christianity, they changed their tutelar deity for St. John Baptist. There still remained some fetish worship however, for, lest he should revenge his deposition, the ancient deity was set up as guardian at the foot of the Old Bridge, and the people believed that his fall would bring ruin to the city. DANTE in *Inferno*, XII, 142-5, refers to this legend.

robber-barons holding the stronghold of Montebuoni, and like many others of their kind, they made a too free use of arms; their skirmishes often taking the character of highway aggression. They were euphoniously called by the travellers who feared them the "Good men of the Mountain" (Buoni del Monte), and when as the feudal times passed away they immigrated into the city, the old title remained as their surname. It is not known which ancestor of our young hero it was, whom Dante wished had been drowned in the Ema, ere he entered Florence; but it was not a very remote one.¹ At the time of which we write, A. D. 1218, young Buondelmonte was a gay young gallant, rich, handsome, and his own master; insomuch as his father was dead, and his mother had spoiled him by indulgence.

It is said the first break between him and the Amidei party took place at a feast at Campi given by Messer Tigrini dei Mazzinghi to celebrate his having won the golden spurs of knighthood. There still stands at Campi an ancient battlemented house which might have been the scene of the disastrous revelry. But a certain friction between the families must have existed previously. For some few years before this, Church and State had been at variance, and Pope Innocent, finding in the Emperor Otho a rival instead of an ally, had caused Frederic of Germany, then King of Sicily, to be crowned King of the Romans. This gave the burghers plenty of

¹ In 1135 the Florentines captured and ruined the Castle of Montebuono, with the pact that the Buondelmonti should go into the city with all their worldly goods, and become good citizens.

subject for controversy, some arguing on the Emperor Otho's side, others stoutly defending the Pontiff.

Little cared Messer Tigrini dei Mazzinghi, however, for Pope or Emperor. He was impartial in his politics; and a very mixed party assembled round his well-furnished table in the great hall, where the bright undinted shield of the new-made knight shone conspicuous, adorned with wreaths of flowers.

Here were the great Amidei clique, consisting of the Lambertesca, Arrighi, Gangalandi and Uberti families, fierce adherents of the Emperor; and the Buondelmonti, Infangati, Donati and others, who were staunch partizans of the Church. At first all went merry as a marriage bell, the guests pledged each other in Messer Tigrini's good *vernaccio* wine, but alas! the toasts were many, and brains—especially young brains—soon become heated. A jester snatched and threw to the dogs a plate of roasted larks, which young Uberto degli Infangati was especially enjoying. He took the loss of his dainty morsel very ill, and grumbled loudly, on which grim Addo of the Arrighi muttered: "It is but fair to share with your poorer kin."

Of course Uberto retorted to this sneer, on which Addo, with a malicious grin, said: "Hear how he growls and barks to prove what a hound he is!"

Uberto fierce with rage, gave Addo the lie direct, on which he retorted: "Ho, ho! you want more bones to pick, do you? Here they are, then," and he threw his trencher in the young man's face.

Buondelmonte sprang up to champion his friend, and threw his glove to Addo, who contemptuously kicked it. On this, Buondelmonte furiously drew his

sword, and the hall of feasting instantly became a scene of fighting. The terrified ladies withdrew; the priests tried to make peace, but not before Addo had been wounded, and his partizans had sworn vengeance.

That oath was not carried out, for among the Amidei was a wily churchman, who foresaw that a quarrel between two such strong parties might bring disastrous results to the peace of Florence; he therefore proposed that reparation should be demanded of Buondelmonte, rather than a passage of arms. The reparation was to take the form of a matrimonial alliance, which the priest designed should bring the Buondelmonte party to strengthen the side of the Amidei. He himself went next day to persuade the gay cavalier that he was doing a grand patriotic action in espousing a niece of Addo Arrighi, and the young man overpowered by priestly craft, assented, though his heart was not in it.

No time was lost, the Amidei prepared the bridal contract, and were all assembled in the hall of the Palazzo Lambertesca in Via Por Santa Maria,¹ with the black-robed notaries awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom to sign it.

The hour passed by, and no bridegroom came; the Amidei looked angry, and old Mosca di Lamberti shook his head with a frown. The bride expectant, sitting silent at her mother's side, grew pale with apprehension, for well she knew her *fiancé* did not love her as she felt she could love him. Another

¹ The Palace, a fine old mass of early Tuscan architecture, is still called by its old name. It is the house with the shrine of San Zanobi on the corner.

hour passed, the great bell of the Palazzo Vecchio, known as "the Vacca," tolled out the Ave Maria, and the shades of evening began to gather in the hall. But deeper shadows, portending storm, gathered on those fierce knitted brows around the oaken table, where the wedding contract lay—a white patch in the gloom.

A clang of the great bell of the *portone* made them all start expectant.

"At last," muttered old Mosca, and he unclenched his rugged hands.

"At last!" sighed the girl, and a flush came into her anxious face.

"At last," cried the partizans, rising to their feet with a clatter. But no bridegroom appeared—only Addo Arrighi's own squire, pale and breathless; who stood in their midst, and hoarsely muttered: "There is treachery."

"Death to the traitor then!" was growled by several voices, "where is he?"

"At Casa Donati," half-whispered the squire.

"What doth he there?"

"What he should be doing here,—signing his marriage contract with Madonna Fina of the Donati. Forese Donati's own page told me so."

"A traitor. He shall die!" echoed in deep angry tones round the room, as a dozen swords were unsheathed.

But the pale, forsaken bride swooned with horror, as she was crying: "No — no — let him live and love — if — he may," and her mother pleading that respect should be paid to the presence of innocent girlhood, the swords dropped again.

Old Mosca half-whispered: "Let us meet at San Stefano at midnight." and each man, as he left the hall, passed the word to his fellows: "San Stefano, midnight."

II.

This is the way in which Buondelmonte broke his troth. He was riding gaily up the Borgo Sant'Apostoli on his spirited barb,—which I believe was the correct name for a horse in those days. The housings of his steed were of red velvet; and of slashed velvet his embroidered doublet. His cap was plumed, and his bright hilted sword clanked on the high saddle as he ambled along the narrow paved street, with his page in buff behind him. As he passed the house of his mother's friend Forese Donati, Monna Gualdrida, Forese's wife, was watching at the window, and beckoned him to enter the house. He rode into the pillared *cortile*, and throwing his bridle to the page, dismounted and ascended to the first floor, where he found Madonna Gualdrida. Poor young fellow! he had let a priest's wily tongue persuade him against his will, but he was even less able to resist a woman than a priest; his manly independence was in far more danger here.

She began by a little feminine banter. "Ha! Buondelmonte, what is this I hear? you are mating with your foes! and going to marry that poor plain damsel of the Amidei? What has induced you to sell yourself thus? do you want the girl's money-bags, or do you fear her kinsmen's brawny arms and sharp swords?"

"I am not to be bought," said the young knight, "and as for fear, if a *man* had dared make that remark,—" and his eyes flashed.

"Aha!" laughed the dame, "I see my mountain eagle is not tamed yet. What then! can it be love?"

"Nay, nay, I love her not, she is too dull for me."

"Did they make you believe it was for the city's welfare? ah! the Amidei are wily men, and know how to bait their traps to catch a noble quarry. But put no faith in them, Buondelmonte, they only want you and your friends, with your stout swords to fight on their side."

The young man began to flush angrily at these taunts, and protested that "he was not to be taken by craft."

Then Madonna Gualdrida began in a different style. She put on a motherly air, and said she was sorry he had entangled himself in the meshes of the adverse party, for she had always hoped that his childish sweetheart, her daughter Fina, would have been his wife.

"She has just come back from the convent-school; you will find her grown a stately maiden now; will you not go in and see her?" She opened the door to the inner room, and Buondelmonte passed on to his fate. As he entered, a lovely girl, whose graceful *zimarra* shewed the beautiful curves of a youthful figure, rose to greet him, but he stopped at the threshold, struck dumb by the sight of her exquisite beauty.

She was the first to speak.

"Do you not know me, Buondelmonte? am I so

altered then? And yet we used to be good friends, when, long ago, we played at Knight and Lady."

The voice which spoke was sweet and joyous, and brought back memories of childhood when his pet playmate had been little Fina, whom he drew about in a fairy car made of her grandfather's battered old shield. He soon found his tongue, and they began chatting of old times, and renewing the old friendship till Madonna Gualdrida came in, and with a shock brought them to present realities, by telling her daughter she ought to be congratulating the bridegroom elect of an Amidei.

Disregarding the hot flush on the young man's face, and the sudden pallor of the girl's, she ruthlessly continued: "Yes, his marriage settlements are already signed."

"No, no!" cried he.

"Or nearly so; he looks a free and comely youth, but he is held fast in chains that will bind him, his gold and arms to the pleasure of the Amidei. Why! if he wished the loveliest bride ever seen, he dare not take her."

"Dare not!" cried the young man, flashing fire, "I have yet to learn what a Buondelmonte dares not do. If you will give me the bride I want, I'll sign the contract here instead of at the Casa Lamberti," and the cavalier sank on his knee at the feet of the girl whose beauty had fascinated him. Gualdrida lost no time in letting him fulfil this hasty vow; and that was why the Amidei waited in vain for him on that darkening evening, and how the powerful faction of Buondelmonte still remained to strengthen Donati's party.

III.

San Stefano¹ at midnight. Did ever church gloom more darkly! A few glimmering lights on the altar only serve to make the shadows in the nave still more black. The altar is lit for no worship, it is not for prayer that these frowning men appear out of the darkness one by one with harsh clanging foot-falls, their shadows following them and blotting out the faint light on the floor and walls of the chancel. Silent they stand, till old Mosca dei Lamberti with his stern and wrinkled face, and rugged grey beard, enters with the deliberate step of old age, and his partizans gather around him to consider how they shall be avenged.

Grim Addo mutters: "Let perjured love avenge itself. We will gash his handsome face so that his bride may turn from him in loathing."

"Or we will cudgel him so soundly that there shall not be left a morsel of his flesh, less corrupt than is his dastardly heart," cries one of the party.

But old Mosca shakes his head: "Nay, nay," he says, "give heed to me; do no half deeds. If in beating him or maiming him, you leave him a breath of life to curse his foes with, the curse will work; and we may as well dig our own graves. Let us be up and doing: "*Cosa fatta, capo ha.*" A deed accomplished is a fact to which all must bow. Death alone can keep such traitors safe."

¹ San Stefano is an old Church at the back of the Lambertesca Palace. There is still an ancient horse-shoe nailed to the door which is said to have been that of Buondelmonte's steed.

A low mutter of assent like the first murmur of a storm echoes dully, through the darkness, as old Mosca continues: "Wait awhile: wait for his wedding-day, and then, when life is sweetest, then,—let him die."

"It is well, we swear," they all reply, and this time the echo is like the first loud peal of thunder in the coming storm.

Just then the big bell of the city booms out the heavy strokes of midnight, and never has the darkest hour marked a darker deed. Every man draws his sword, and they cross the blades above the altar, till they form a sinister star gleaming in the pale light of the waxen candles, while the group of fierce, set faces gathering round, take awful shadows, as they cry with one voice:

"Death to the traitor. Death! we swear."

Was ever an altar put to a more sacrilegious use? unless it were, perhaps, the altar of the Duomo, some centuries later, when the Pazzi chose it as the scene of their murderous conspiracy.

It is a curious sign of the perverted religious feeling of the times, that men should dress up their passions and revenge in sacred semblance, and offer them on the altar as a sacrifice to God. The old Florentine classed patriotism above religion, and often mistook revenge for love of country.

IV.

It was Easter day. Florence had never looked more bright; the river reflected back the blue and sunshine

of the sky; the distant mountains were blue, and tipped with silver snow.

Across the old bridge passed a gay wedding procession. Buondelmonte and his bride had just plighted their troth in the Church of Santa Felicità, and were riding in bridal joy across the river to the bride's new home on Piazza Santa Trinità. Buondelmonte was clad in a rich jerkin, embroidered with silver, a white mantle thrown over his shoulder, and his head was wreathed with spring blossoms, the flowers of hope. Fina of the Donati wore a *zimarra* of bridal white, embroidered with pearls; a short veil of lace of her own weaving hid her fair curls, and she too was crowned with a floral wreath. They rode two milkwhite palfreys whose housings were of bright red cloth embroidered with gold; curly haired pages richly bedight, led their steeds.

Behind them followed the bride's maidens, and then the two mothers, Gualdrida Donati, and Monna Buondelmonte, each borne in a litter with silken canopy; and behind them came scores of gay cavaliers.

As they rode over the bridge, Via Por Santa Maria seemed empty, and they felt not a shadow of their coming fate; but just as they were passing that ancient fetish, the statue of Mars, at the foot of the bridge, its evil influence fell upon them; the great doors of the Amidei palace were suddenly thrown open, a knot of men rushed out, and while Buondelmonte was still smiling on his bride, Schiatta di Lamberti felled him to the ground with his mace.

Addo Arrighi then pushed his kinsman away, say-



ing: "Me, he insulted, revenge is mine," and he repeatedly plunged his dagger into the young man as he fell at the feet of the god of war. Old Mars looked on immovable at this ill-omened sacrifice, wreathed and garlanded, and offered in blood, as sacrifices had been offered before him in ancient times.

The deed was done before even Fina had time to miss her lover from her side, but soon her horrified shrieks threw the whole procession into confusion. It is said her shriek was echoed from on high, where the betrothed he had forsaken, stood on the tower of the Lambertesca palace, watching in fascinated horror the deed of vengeance.

The Amidei had rushed back to their fortress palaces, and barricaded the doors, so though Buondelmonte's partizans were hot for vengeance, the enemy was no longer at hand.

By evening the city was in a ferment, the demon of discord, which had been growling for some time, was unchained. The god Mars was revenged on christianized Florence for his dethronement, the reign of war had again begun, and was to last for centuries. The party of the murdered man lost no chance of rousing the bitterest feelings of his partizans. They placed his corpse on an open bier, the head resting in the lap of his bride; and thus united, the living and the dead were borne through the streets of Florence, while the cry went up: "A Buondelmonte! to the rescue."

After this, there were no more uncertain politics such as good Ser Tigrini had held; the whole city divided itself. Of the seventy-two powerful families

then in Florence, thirty-nine joined the Buondelmonti and thirty-three the Amidei. They assumed the respective names of Guelphs and Ghibellines.

The Guelph party to which the Buondelmonti belonged, were the popular faction and adherents of the Church; the name was derived from Guelfi the husband of the powerful Countess Matilda, who was such an adherent of Pope Gregory VII in his quarrels with Henry IV of Germany the invader of Italy. The Ghibellines, or party of the nobles, were so-called because that Henry IV, grand-son of Conrad II, was born at Ghibeling.

The strife raged fiercely during all the 13th and 14th centuries; till long after the first warring Pope and Emperor were dead. For centuries the Church and Empire were at war, and whether the leaders were Gregory and Henry, or Innocent and Otho, seems to have made little difference.

At length, the nobles being chiefly Ghibellines and the burghers Guelphs, the cause became a mere struggle between nobles and people (*Grandi e Piccoli*) or white and black (*Bianchi e Neri*).

Whatever names the factions took, the Buondelmonti seemed to be in the thickest of the fight. At one time, the war-cries were "A Cavalcante," and "A Buondelmonte;" then "Uberty" and "Buondelmonti." Sometimes the Buondelmonti were exiled, sometimes the Lamberti and Uberty.

Another attempt was made in 1239 to reconcile these deadly enemies by marriage. Ranieri Zingani de' Buondelmonti had a lovely daughter, as wise as she was beautiful, whom some diplomatists proposed

as a wife to Neri Piccolino degli Uberti. This time it was from the Buondelmonti that the insult came, and, strange to say, the glove was again thrown at Campi. The marriage took place, and the Uberti, trusting too much in the promised truce, went to visit their new relations the Buondelmonti, who had a villa at Campi, near that of good peaceable Messer Tigrini de' Mazzinghi, whose feast they had spoiled some twenty years before. But the Buondelmonti were many and implacable; because their kinswoman had been offered as a sacrifice to peace, they were none the less disposed to continue the old enmity. They received their guests so ungraciously as to offer them cold steel instead of wedding cakes; and quite a fierce little skirmish took place in the Buondelmonte vineyards.

Neri degli Uberti, regardless of his beautiful bride, took up his kinsmen's cause with acrimony, and when his unfortunate wife begged for mercy on her family, he remorselessly turned her out of his house, and sent her under escort to her own home, with a contemptuous message that "his line should never be mingled with that of such a traitorous brood as the Buondelmonti."

The wretched Lady's kin were certainly "less than kind," for they decided that a scorned wife should have no place among them, and in the autocratic fashion usual to Florentine fathers of the *trecento*, her father decreed that she must be remarried immediately. He chose as her second husband an adherent of his own, Conte Pannochino de' Pannochieschi. She implored her father to spare her this in-

dignity, but he was implacable. She was forced to go through the ceremony, but threw herself on her husband's mercy, and prayed earnestly for his permission to retire to a convent. She said that her love and her vows had been given to Neri degli Uberti, that he was still her husband in the sight of God, and that while he lived, she could never belong to another.

The Count, being a gentleman, respected her motives, and she retired to the Convent of Monticelli, outside the Porta San Frediano, where she soon afterwards took the veil, and shut herself out from a world that had been so cruel to her. And while she prayed for peace within the quiet walls, Uberti and Buondelmonti, with their allies on both sides, quarrelled and fought for many a lustre. In 1251 the Guelphs were victorious over the Ghibellines at Pistoja, and changed the white lily of Florence to a blood-red hue on their banners of victory.

By the year 1258 the people had grown so strong that they drove out the Ghibelline nobles from the city, and as the Uberti, being most rancorous, were most bitterly hated, the populace pulled down their very houses, not leaving one stone upon another. Forty years after this, the people's hatred of the Uberti was not a jot abated, for when in 1298 Arnolfo di Lapi made his plan for the Palazzo Vecchio, and one corner of it would have stood on the site of the ruined Uberti houses, the city rose like one man to protest "Never should the priors of a free republic sit in a place where tyranny and oppression had ruled." So Arnolfo had to curve his great fort-

ress-like walls, and the building itself shrank away from the place of the hated Uberti.

The only one of the family whose name was not abhorred, was that fine fellow Farinata degli Uberti, who acted as head of the Ghibelline party during this last exile. He was their ambassador to King Manfred, who sent his Germans to aid them in defending Siena which they made their headquarters. The Florentines had marched up to Siena, with several thousand men, Pisa and Lucca having sent contingents. The *Carroccio* and *Martinella* lumbered on with the army. The famous battle of Montaperto took place on September 4,th 1260, under a fierce sun, and the Florentines lost both their revered *Carroccio*, and their independence. Hundreds of them were dragged prisoners into Siena, while the Ghibellines made a rush to Florence, and drove out 1260 Guelphs, who went weeping to Lucca.

It was then that Farinata came out so nobly. When the Ghibellines in council proposed to entirely destroy Florence, and knock down its very walls, Farinata rose up and alone dared to veto the decree. Shewing the folly of such vandalism, he said: "The city, ungrateful as it has been to my house, is dear to my heart, and my own sword shall defend it to the death."

Conte Giordano, being moved by this courage, seconded the veto and counselled prudence, so Florence was after all saved by an Uberti. It was sad, as it was significant, that this brave Farinata should ultimately have lost his life by the hand of a Buon-delmonte. In one of the many engagements which

took place near Lucca, Farinata was riding off with Cece dei Buondelmonti as prisoner behind him, when Piero, brother of Cece (nicknamed the Ass) struck him down from behind, by a blow on the head from his mace. Treachery and enmity to the bitter end!

IV.

A STORY OF THE VIA DEI BARDI

(A. D. 1229)

Across the Ponte Vecchio, and extending thence to Ponte alle Grazie on the Oltr'Arno side, lies a street of old palaces of massive stone; which on one side overlook the river, and on the other face the olive-clad hills that slope up to the fort and the temple which crown the heights of San Giorgio and San Miniato.

The street in its ancient aspect has been cut up by the new embankments on the Arno, but many of the old palaces are saved. Near the Ponte Vecchio there is a small irregular Piazza which still retains the name of the church which has vanished: Santa Maria Sopr'Arno. Here is a large handsome palace built above the arch leading up the Costa San Giorgio. It has richly decorated windows, and a bust above the arched door. This is the Palazzo Tempi, now Bargagli. It was restored from the more ancient palace of Amerigo dei Bardi, head of the great family whose twenty-three houses once reached all down the street nearly to the bridge where stood the Mozzi palaces. Amerigo's house was partially destroyed in 1343, when the Bardi with other Ghibellines were exiled.

English visitors make devout pilgrimages to Via dei Bardi to determine the important question which of these real houses the imaginary Romola inhabited.

The real Romola, Alessandra della Scala, by the bye, lived in Via della Scala, and not in Via dei Bardi at all, but I will tell you a story of an actual *trecento* heroine, who lived

and loved, in one of those fine old houses. It is another tale of the loves of the Buondelmonti, who seem to have had a peculiar taste for wooing their enemies' daughters.

DIANORA AND IPPOLITO

It is said that the Buondelmonti and Bardi hated each other to the death. This is difficult to believe, as the older historians name both families on the Guelphic side. It is true, that some of the Buondelmonti seceded from their party and Messer Ippolito may have been one of these; or there may have been a private "vendetta" between the two houses.

Any way, we will take the feud for granted, as it is asserted in a Latin MS. in possession of the Peruzzi family, written by a certain Paolo Cortese, from which Rossi takes this story especially as a feud adds picturesqueness to a love tale.

Dianora dei Bardi, daughter of Amerigo, was a motherless girl of about 16 years old, and evidently a girl of strong character as well as great beauty. Her life's romance began on the fête-day of St. John, in 1229, when all Florence looked its gayest. Every window was adorned with coloured cloths and banners; the streets were full of country folk bringing their tributes of wax candles or corn to the Signoria; and the great Piazza was gay with the standards and trophies of all the cities and provinces tributary to Florence. Every church was gorgeous with flowers,

candles, and silk hangings; and every house gay with feastings, balls, and rejoicings.

On this 24th of June the young Dianora donned her richest *zimarra* of embroidered silk, and went with her aunt to the Church of San Giovanni. As she knelt beneath the dome of gorgeous mosaics, a stray gleam of light illumining her beautiful head with its rich plaits of hair braided with pearls, there stood near her a handsome young cavalier. He was duly bedight with embroidered doublet and mantle; silken hose showed his comely legs, and a plumed cap was in the hand that rested on his glittering sword-hilt.

Instead of giving his attention to his orisons, or the mitred bishop at the altar, this inflammable young man was falling headlong in love, with the proverbial haste of his nation; for Romeo and Juliet are not a romantic exception, but a type in Italy. Whenever the girl glanced up, her eyes met those of the young knight, and fell again; each time with more interest, so that at last a blush accompanied each glance, which made her girlish face still more bewitching. In fact, before the benediction was given, Ippolito was in love for life, and Dianora's young heart was already stirred.

She did not know who her hero was, but from that festal summer day he seemed to form the principal figure in her life. If she went to mass with her aunt or her old nurse, she could not say her prayers for the feeling that he was there close by, looking at her. When she walked in the evening, with her father, among the Florentines on the Piazza of Santa

Reparata she furtively scanned every group of gay young gallants for the upright manly figure, and was sure to see him watching wistfully for her. At night when she looked out from her window, and saw the moonlight falling on loggia and wall, she would also descry a handsome face uplifted into the light with its eyes fixed on her window; and sometimes she heard a voice in the darkness, singing of love, and knew the words were for her, yet she dared not answer this unknown lover. He had the advantage of her in this respect, for he had discovered to his dismay that his divinity was a Bardi, and realized that his must be a hopeless love, which would possibly end in tragedy. The more he saw of her, the more he knew how far she was out of his reach, and, of course, the more he wanted her.

So much did he fret against fate and the obstacles to his overwhelming love, that he at length worked himself into a fever, and wasting illness, which kept him in bed, and puzzled the doctors. His mother, wiser than they, conjectured a mental cause for this mysterious illness, and besought him to confide in her. In a moment of extreme discouragement, he opened his heart to her, and said that if she did not help him to secure Dianora for his wife, he should surely die; and she motherlike, wishing to save her son, promised to do all she could for him.

Now there lived in a villa at Monticelli, a certain lady named Contessa, who besides being a friend of Madonna Buondelmonte, was also a relative of Dianora dei Bardi. To her the distressed mother betook herself, and so interested her in this pair of distracted

lovers, that Madonna Contessa promised her assistance in bringing them together.

By this time it was late September; the grapes were ripe for the gathering, and Dame Contessa invited her friends, for the annual feast of the *vendemmia*. Of course Dianora and her aunt were among the guests. In the morning the young people went out to gather the grapes, and a gay scene they made flitting about with laugh and song among the festoons of vines. But Ippolito was not among the gatherers. He was waiting in a room, to which Monna Contessa brought Dianora after dinner under pretence of resting from her labours. When after months of silent and distant love the two young people met, and were able to grasp hands and speak together, it did not take long to come to a complete understanding and their ardent vows to love till death seemed superfluous. They soon agreed that as their fathers' hatred was as powerful as their own love, their marriage must be a secret one; and by the united aid of the two ladies and a certain easily persuaded priest, this was speedily accomplished.

I am sorry for the originality of this story that the "sposi" could think of nothing newer than a ladder of ropes—but such were the means decided on to enable them to meet. Ippolito was to bring the silken ladder concealed in his cap, and Dianora was to let down a cord from her window to draw it up. Just as he was standing beneath the window, awaiting the cord, he heard a sudden ring of armed heels on the echoing pavements, and the patrol of the Podestà, which nightly paraded the streets, came round a corner

upon him. He swiftly took to flight, but his cap had fallen on the ground with the silk ladder in it. The guards rushed after him, and he was forthwith pinioned, and taken off to the palace of the Podestà a prisoner.

Next morning he was brought before the Podestà, who in all the panoply of office, interrogated him, as to the object of his nocturnal designs at Palazzo Bardi. Ippolito, determined to die sooner than bring his bride's name into a shameful publicity, asserted that he was attempting to enter the rich Bardi's house, with intent to rob.

The judge was stupified at the idea of a son of the house of Buondelmonte, the head of the Guelph faction, confessing to any such low and mercenary design, and sent for the father of the young man. In his presence, the question was repeated, and the same answer obstinately given. The elder Buondelmonte declared it to be impossible, such a thing was unheard of; he would believe his son mad, or a gallant, but could not believe him a common robber. Messer Buondelmonte senior wept, he protested, and he pleaded, but the Podestà, backed up by the laws, declared that he must do his duty. The black flag was consequently hoisted on the balcony of the Podestà's office, and the big bell boomed out from its turret to let Florence know that a malefactor was condemned to death.

The Buondelmonti were all furious and intensely indignant; nothing could make them believe that Ippolito had intended a vulgar robbery on the family foes; but that he sacrificed his name and his honor

with that of his kinsmen to save the fair fame of a girl of the rival house, never entered into their heads to conceive.

However, threats and entreaties were in vain, Ippolito was doomed. He only asked one boon, and this seemed a strange one: he prayed that he might pass the Via dei Bardi on his way to the scaffold, and though it added mystery to the affair, it was granted. He said he wished to make his peace with the Bardi before he died, but his real reason was a faint hope that he might once more see Dianora for whom he had sacrificed so much.

Nor was he disappointed.

Of course Dianora was not ignorant of her lover's condemnation, the utter fall of a Buondelmonte would have been so gratifying to the Bardi, that they would have made it a matter of constant talk at table, little imagining that every word in which they gloated over the misfortunes of Ippolito, was a stab in the heart to the pale and trembling girl, who could scarcely restrain herself from shrieking in agony in their midst. She kept much to her own room, where in solitude she wept her woes unheeded, for there was no loving mother on whose breast she could have poured them out.

The next morning hearing the ominous ring of the bell which the priests tolled as they walked before the condemned man, Dianora, whose mind was dwelling in dread on similar things, hastened to her window, and saw that the prisoner about to die was indeed her own husband.

The whole horror of the situation rushed over her

in a flood, carrying away with it all thought of herself or her own family. She and no one else had brought him to this pass: he had told a lie to save her, she must tell the truth to save him.

Her fear of her father and kinsmen had hitherto restrained her. Now in this supreme moment, restraints and fears were suddenly cast aside. She rushed down the stairs and out into the street, amongst the crowd, to Ippolito's side, crying:

"This is my husband, I swear it. He is guilty of no other crime than that of sacrificing his honor to save mine," then turning to the Captain of the guard, who was leading the procession, she sank on her knees, imploring pardon for Ippolito.

"This must be judged by the Podestà," said the Captain. He despatched a messenger to the Via Proconsolo, and ordered that the procession should retrace its steps; but this time, instead of one prisoner there were two, hand in hand. In the face of the woman was glory and exultation that he whom she loved should, through her, be saved; in the face of the man was an inexplicable mixture of disappointment at a sacrifice offered in vain, glory in his wife's love, and yet a shrinking fear, as to what might be its consequences.

With a great populace following them, they were arraigned before the Podestà, who had hastily donned his black and yellow robe of office, and awaited them in the Tribune. It was Dianora who spoke; she denied that her husband was a thief, but asserted him to be a gallant knight who had faced a felon's death to save his lady's good fame. Indeed she so





moved the heart of that stern judge, that he declared if the power of the Signoria and priors could avail, this marriage of two faithful souls should be ratified, and publicly acknowledged ; on which a mighty shout of approval went up from the crowd, who had followed them in for mere curiosity, but who had now become their enthusiastic partizans.

The Signoria, stirred thereto by the Podestà, did really interfere. They called a council, before which they cited the heads of the two houses, and reasoned them into not only concluding a peace, but ratifying the secret marriage of the lovers.

So in the halls of the Palazzo Vecchio, the Buondelmonti and Bardi shook hands, and they met together at the wedding-feast which celebrated the public nuptials of Dianora and Ippolito.

The old chronicler concludes in good old style :
“They lived happily for a long time, and became the parents of a numerous progeny.”

V.

A STORY OF PONTE ALLE GRAZIE

(A. D. 1236-8)

The Ponte alle Grazie is the stone bridge furthest up the Arno beyond the Uffizi gallery. In point of age it ranks the third of the four bridges. The Ponte Vecchio, or the Old Bridge, was the first of all, and the Ponte alla Carraia, which dates from 1218, the second. Before 1237 there was only a slight bridge of planks with a hand rail across the river opposite the Mozzi palace. Our story will give the reason of its being replaced by a better one when Messer Rubaconte was Podestà. In those old times the banks at that point were very low, and the river bed extended up to the foot of Palazzo Mozzi. The houses of the Bardi flanked the river on the south side, those of the Alberti on the north. The Mozzi lived close by the bridge on the south, next the Bardi. Floods were very frequent and alarming before the embankment was built, which has saved that part of the city from many an inundation. The new bridge was first known as Ponte Rubaconte, but in 1372 the Alberti family built on one of the piers a small oratory dedicated to the Madonna delle Grazie, after which Messer Rubaconte's bridge took its more modern name of "Ponte alle Grazie." The houses and oratory were removed in 1874, when the bridge was widened and modernized.

During the 13th century the other piers were taken as the foundation for shops, and small houses; in one of which some holy women walled themselves up as in a hermitage, and lived there for years, depending only on the food brought them by devotees. These nuns were the origin of the "Mo-

nache delle Murate,¹” who in the middle ages walled themselves into their convent, the better to keep their vows of renunciation of the world.

THE PODESTÀ AND THE BATHMAN²

In olden times the Ponte alle Grazie was known as the bridge of Rubaconte, from the Podestà in whose year of office it was built.

In order that readers may be informed as to the station and dignity of a Podestà, an officer who figures largely in old Florentine stories, it will be needful to give a slight sketch of the machinery of government under the Republic. It was one of the finest schemes of self-government ever planned, and would have been the most just, if party feeling had not distorted it.

The city was geographically divided into quarters: Santo Spirito, Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella and San Giovanni; named after the dedications of their presiding Churches. Each quarter was politically subdivided into four gonfalons under civil Captains. These divisions took their names after the gonfalons or standards which they carried. If tabulated they would run thus:

Quarter Santo Spirito. Ladder, Shell, Whip, and Dragon.

¹ The “convent of the Murate” is now a prison. Caterina Sforza took refuge there after her many trials, and died in the convent. Catherine de Medici was placed with the nuns during her girlhood, before her marriage to Henry IV of France.

² Told on the authority of Sacchetti, *Novella 196*, and Manni, *Veglie Piacevoli*.

Quarter Santa Maria Novella. Viper, Unicorn, Red Lion, and White Lion.

Quarter San Giovanni. Black Lion, Dragon, Keys, and Ermine (Vair).

Quarter Santa Croce. Car, Ox, Golden Lion, and Wheel.

Every household was classed under one of these quarters and gonfalons. The sixteen Gonfalonieri or Captains of divisions, were collectively called "Colleagues," and were bound to arm their men for war on the call of the Gonfaloniere of Justice, who was ruler in chief, or President of the Republic.

The 12 Buonomini, or "Good Men"—a Council to watch over the civil well-being of the city, and act as special advisers to the Priors,—were also called Colleagues, because they could pass no decree without the concurrence of the Signoria.

This Signoria or ruling Council was formed of eight Priors, two from each quarter; who were elected every two months, and they in turn elected the *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*, or President. This magistracy together with the 16 Gonfalonieri of the Quarters, and 12 Buonomini, lived entirely in the Palazzo Vecchio during their term of office; and altogether they formed the chief Council, the whole being known as the "College and Colleagues" or Signoria.

There was also a second Council, whose action was similar to our House of Commons. It was called the Senate, and consisted of two separate Councils: the *popolani*, or Council of the people; and the nobles and plebs, who formed the Council for the Commune.

The burghers had their own civil divisions into twenty-

one *Arti* or Trade-Guilds, seven of which: the Notaries, Cloth dressers, Exchange, Wool merchants, Silk merchants, Medical men, and Furriers, were ranked as Greater Arts; and all the other fourteen as Lesser.

In processions they had their due order of precedence.

The eight Priors were chosen in regard to the guilds, as well as the quarters. Six of them from the greater Arts, and two from the lesser; the same rule held in the election of the Colleagues. The Priors representing the greater Arts were in common parlance said to "go for the greater," the minor two "went for the less."

Burghers, who were supposed to represent capital, paid taxes; artisans who lived wholly by labor paid none.

The "*Squittinio*" was a separate Council to look into the qualities of eligible burghers. All the laws and provisions proposed by the Signoria had to be carried by the College, next by the Senate, and last by the Councils. Besides this great organization, there were several detached Councils, such as the "Six of peace," the "Eight of war," who in times of peace became the "*Otto di guardia*," and were delegated to conduct criminal trials and business under the Podestà.

Here we are at last arrived at the Podestà, a very great dignitary indeed, who acted as supreme judge. He lived in the Bargello or State prison, where his Court was held, and was almost the only influential official in the city who was not a Florentine. In order to ensure strict impartiality in the criminal courts, the Podestà was chosen annually from a distant place, and it was a strict rule that he should have no relatives in the city. There was in the early Republic a similar officer named the *Esecutore*, who

was a kind of judge for civil cases, and also entrusted with the carrying out of the decrees of the Signoria. In 1435 this office was suppressed, and the business of his court amalgamated with that of the Podestà.

They each had their train of underlings. The household of the Podestà consisted of two Colleagues to assist in judging civil cases, another for criminal ones, four Notaries, eight *Donzelli* or squires, and a Constable with twenty-five *Sbirri* or constables, which little band paraded the streets every night to see that all was quiet.

When an important cause was to be tried, the Podestà, in his gown of gold brocade, sat between the two judges; a boy in blue, holding a drawn sword, stood behind his chair. The Notaries dressed in black robes sat at a table before him. In early times the office of the Podestà was in the Via Proconsolo, but later it was removed to the Bargello, which was built for it in 1250.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the judge was named the "Bargello" and the older title fell into disuse.

Having thus introduced the Podestà in the abstract, we will proceed to introduce in person the one of his order who first appears as a really lifelike figure in the pages of the chroniclers. Messer Rubaconte came from the far north, even from Como, to judge the Florentines in the year 1236, and was so much liked that he was re-elected in 1237.

He had not been two months in office when one day a certain man known as Bagnai, because he kept a bathing-house, was brought before him by a party of angry people who, declaring that he had killed one

of their family, demanded justice on him. Bagnai was a very simple fellow, and odd in his ways; nevertheless, on being questioned by the dignitary in cloth of gold not even his awe of the terrible functionary in blue behind the judge, holding a drawn sword, prevented him from volubly telling his story from his own point of view:

“Noble Messer Podestà,” said Bagnai, “the fault is not mine. I might very easily have been the dead man instead of him. This is the case: I was crossing the Arno on the little wooden bridge, near the house of Messer Mozzi—which bridge, as your excellency knows, is very narrow—when there came prancing by a great company of cavaliers on horseback. To avoid being trampled to death, I was obliged to mount on the wooden rail at the side, but a horse pushing against me, I straightway fell over the bridge. By ill chance I pitched on the head of a man who was washing his feet in the river, and unluckily broke his neck; so he died, as much to my grief, as to that of his relatives.”

“He has killed our kinsman, Messer Podestà,” cried the angry prosecutors, “give him the utmost pain of the law; our honour requires it.”

Good Messer Rubaconte was puzzled. An accident could not be punished as murder, yet a man was dead, and the unfortunate Bagnai was undoubtedly the cause of the catastrophe. At length he spoke:

“Friends, your honour shall be maintained, and your injury avenged. What has been done to you, you shall render to him. Let Bagnai go into the Arno to wash his feet at the same spot, and one of you, the avengers of the dead man, must fall from the bridge on his neck, and so shall all have their due.”

The prosecutors' faces fell, they sighed, and went sorrowfully and silently out from the presence of the wise Podestà, for, though they were willing enough that Bagnai's neck should be broken, they decidedly declined to accomplish the desired end by risking their own."

The event set Messer Rubaconte thinking:—a bridge so narrow that wayfarers must either be kicked to death, or fall over the edge if a few horsemen passed by, was truly not a convenient bridge for a populous city such as Florence was becoming. So he became an agitator on the point, and worked up the Priors to decree the building of a solid and commodious stone bridge, of which he himself laid the foundation stone, and carried the first basket of mortar with all due civic ceremony in 1236. Wherefore the bridge was named the Ponte Rubaconte in his honour.

He still further displayed his generosity by causing several of the streets to be decently paved, so that they might be more clean, salubrious and convenient.

The trial of which we have spoken was not the only occasion on which Messer Rubaconte was Bagnai's judge.

One day as Bagnai was walking on a road, a peasant whose wretched half-starved donkey had fallen down, called to him for help.

"I pray you, good man, to take hold of the beast by his hind quarters, and I will lift his head, and together we shall get him on his legs again—come up now!"

Bagnai seized the tail and pulled with such a will that that useful appendage broke in his hand.

The ungrateful peasant furiously declared his beast



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EGIDIO GIANNINI



mutilated, and took Bagnai before the Podestà to obtain redress.

When, during the interrogation, the complainant muttered: "I did not tell him to pull the tail off," and Bagnai said naïvely: "I thought a donkey's tail would have been better stuck on," Messer Rubaconte lost his judicial gravity, and laughed. Having composed his countenance again, he proceeded to advise the litigants to depart in peace, since, although the tail could not be stuck on again, the donkey was not thereby disabled from carrying a load.

"But how will he whisk off the flies?" cried the peasant, determined to find a grievance. Then being pressed for a judgment, Messer Rubaconte, with a keen twinkle in his eyes, said:

"Bagnai must perform the office which he has deprived the donkey of power to perform. He shall keep the donkey in his stall till his tail has grown again, and then return him to you."

As the peasant preferred a partial donkey to no donkey at all, the case ended in resignation to the inevitable.

Another day Bagnai, who was always having adventures, found a purse containing 400 florins, and being an honest man, though simple, he gave it up to a certain person who claimed it. This man however, declared that 100 florins were missing, and poor Bagnai was again dragged before the Podestà. Quoth Messer Rubaconte, having heard the case:

"Tell me, oh! complainant, if you think it likely that this honest man has robbed from a purse, which he has lost no time in returning to its owner?"

"No," replied the prosecutor, "but this is not mine, for mine had 500 florins in it."

"Ah!" said the Podestà, "then my judgment is that Bagnai shall keep this purse till you find one with 500 florins; you, meanwhile, giving him security that this is not yours," and he sent him about his business.

When Messer Rubaconte's year of office was at an end, and he had to render up his papers, some citizens wished to re-elect him, but others opposed the vote, asserting that his judgments were often extraneous to the laws and statutes of the Florentine Republic. But he defended himself by saying that "Law must be tempered by discretion" (a speech which afterwards became proverbial), and held that though the law says "He who kills shall himself be killed," this precept should not always be literally carried out, but administered with judgment.

The Council ended in his re-election for a year, his colleague being M. Agnolo Malabranca.¹ So much were his nobility of character, probity, and keen judgment appreciated by the Signoria, that they sent him back to Como at length, laden with honors. They quartered his arms with the arms of the people, and painted his shield on the house he had occupied in Via dei Bardi, near the bridge which he erected.

¹ Simone della Tosa (*Annali*, p. 126) gives his years of office as 1237-8, but Padre Idelfonzo, in vol. VII of *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, says he was Podestà in 1236-7, and perhaps also 1238. The change of calendar in the 16th century may be the cause of the constant divergence of a year in the dates given by different authors in reporting previous events.

VI.

THE STORY
OF THE *CROCE AL TREBBIO*

(A. D. 1244)

The *Croce al Trebbio* is the ancient cross on a column that stands at the meeting of three ways in the Via delle Belle Donne, near Piazza Santa Maria Novella. It is a work of the Pisan school; but whether by Niccolò or Giovanni, who were in Florence about that epoch, there is nothing to show. There was a curious Latin inscription in Gothic letters which began: "Sanctus Ambrosius cum Sancto Zenobio propter grande mysterium hanc crucem:" and went on to say that it was reconsecrated by the Bishops of Florence and of Aquileia in August, 1308.

What was the great mystery which the two Saints commemorated, is hard to say. It may have referred to the miraculous second visit of St. Ambrose which I have related in the first story.

A FLORENTINE CRUSADE

About the time of the Buondelmonte episode, the religious population of Florence was much exercised at the increased influence of a certain party of secessionists, called Paulicians, Consolati, or Credenti.

These sectarians met with such a course of persecution wherever they went, that in time they gained another name: that of *Paterini* or sufferers.

In fact, they were the Protestant party of the time, their ancestors had been persecuted as Manicheans in the time of Theodosius; their contemporaries were massacred in Italy and France as Paterini and Albigenes; their descendants, still secessionists, have been Calvinists, Wickliffites or Unitarians, according as they held more strongly to one or others of the different points of the original doctrines.

The sect seems to have originated with a certain Constantius Sylvanus of Samosata, who in A.D. 660 received from a deacon a copy of the New Testament, and gave himself up with complete devotion to the study of St. Paul, and his doctrines. From this "cult" they were called Paulicians.

Their tenets were however somewhat mixed. They acknowledged two creative influences, the visible evil, and the invisible good, yet they believed both matter and spirit to be eternal. They rejected the Old Testament because they could not make its God of vengeance agree with the doctrines of the New Testament. They excluded images, relics, and mediation of saints; holding only to Christ and the Gospel. They admitted the spirituality of Christ, but denied his incarnation; and they thought that men were angels fallen from pristine glory, who would, after purification, resume their former state. This is a curious enough mixture of faith and heresy, and one predestined to persecution. Constantius Sylvanus himself fell in the Greek persecution, being stoned to

death by an apostate disciple of his own, and it is said that 100,000 Paulicians were massacred in one reign. Yet the sect increased!

About the 11th century they had a respite, for the Emperor Zimisces favored them, and Alexius Comnenus, tried to reconcile their doctrines with the Church. Their primate at this time lived on the confines of Croatia, Bulgaria, and Dalmatia, where the Paterini had taken root; and whence they emigrated into Bohemia to sow the seed for Wickliffe and Huss. A number of them emigrated to Albe in Languedoc, and became Albigenes.

They appeared at Milan in 1176, and in Florence about 1212, a man named Filippo Paternon being their leader in the latter city.

Their priesthood consisted of four orders, the bishop, the elder son, the younger son, and the deacon, who all succeeded by laying on of hands. That early Christian form of blessing was carried out in their religious meetings, where, after the preaching, each worshipper prostrated himself before the bishop, who placed his hands on each head in benediction. Not only did men preach, but even women prophesied in their churches, and their meetings held at San Gaggio and in the plain of the Mugnone were so interesting, and converts increased so rapidly, that the attention of the Church was drawn to them.

Giovanni di Velletri was then Bishop of Florence, and determining to extirpate this pest of heresy, he got himself made Inquisitor in ordinary, and arming himself also with imperial and municipal authority he set to work. The heretic bishop Filippo Paternon

was arrested, and put to the torture;—yet the sect still waxed stronger.

Another ecclesiastic named Giovanni di Salerno, Prior of Santa Maria Novella, and two of his monks, stirred up the ardour of the whole order of Dominicans; the Franciscans followed suit with less animosity though equal vigour; and the heretics still proving obstinate, a regular Holy War was begun. The quiet of the streets was frequently disturbed by fighting friars, and devotees; while in the churches sermons of a peculiarly inflammatory nature were preached.

As time and opposition went on, the Paterini still increased in power. Several of the influential Florentines, such as the Pulci, brought their support, and then came a new Podestà from Bergamo, Messer Pace di Pesannola, who was himself a Paterino. Under him the persecuted people armed themselves, and waxed yet stronger.

This continued till 1244, when a new Dominican preacher came to Florence,—a tall, dark, martial young monk from Verona, named Pietro, who was endowed with an inflaming rush of eloquence that carried everything before it. Like his predecessor, Peter the Hermit, he preached, and the zeal he awakened turned into war and bloodshed.

The young cavaliers of Florence flocked to the convent, and offering their arms for the putting down of heresy, they formed a military Order for the protection of the great preacher, and the extirpation of the enemies of the Church. Twelve young men of good family were enrolled under the title of “Capitani di Santa Maria,” and the Pope granted them special

privileges. Their leader was Corso Velluti, a giant of a man who had come to Florence from Semifonte in his early youth, when that fortress was taken in 1202. He was therefore at this time in the prime of life. His originally fine complexion was ruined with scars, for fighting was his delight. Such iron muscles had he, that he could break any man's arm by the pressure of his hand, while none could even bruise his flesh.

He lived in a little house known as *Casalina*, among the gardens on the other side of the Arno in what is now Via Maggio. His was the first house built on that site, and it had an open corridor extending along its entire length. In his old age, when he got blind, he used to walk up and down this corridor before breakfast, till he had walked a distance of three or four miles, and then he would eat two loaves for breakfast, and an enormous dinner later in the day. He was more than 100 years old when he died, and often went to the public warm bath, or "Stufa" as it was called. One day during the vapour bath, he scalded his foot and was lamed, so that he could not take his usual exercise, and the want of this caused his death. He sat in his chair, and calling his children around him gave them his blessing; one of these was the father of that Donato Velluti who wrote this story in his *Cronaca di Donato Velluti*.

Corso Velluti then being ready, challenged the Paterini to open fight, and the new military order was led to battle by giant Corso. The tall ascetic monk Pietro, waving his red-cross banner, spurred on the "dogs of the Lord" (as the Dominicans were called

in that martial episode) and their knights, to their mad and bloody crusade.

The Paterini were ready for the fray. Twice they came boldly to the attack, but Fra Pietro brandished his red cross, shouting such a torrent of kindling eloquence, that every monk became a hero, and every knight invincible. Such prodigies of valour were performed that the Paterini were utterly vanquished. The victorious monks and their military defenders went back to the convent, glorying in their victory, and determined to celebrate it even to future ages. So they erected a triumphal column where one of the two decisive battles took place, at the meeting of three roads in Via delle Belle Donne. This Croce al Trebbio is a fine column, on the capital of which are sculptured the emblems of the four Evangelists; a large Crucifix on a ball, emblematical of Christ triumphing over the world, surmounts it. This cross seems to have been substituted for the older one which had been placed by St. Ambrose and St. Zanobius of Florence "on account of a great mystery."

There is another column on Piazza Santa Felicità, which from its statue (now disappeared) of St. Peter Martyr, has been held as also commemorative of this crusade; but it is proved that it was erected by the nuns of the convent of Santa Felicità in the 13th century, in place of an ancient pyramid in what was once a Roman cemetery; and that Amerigo dei Rossi placed the statue in 1484 in memory of one of his ancestors, who had been one of the twelve knights of Santa Maria Novella. This statue fell, and was broken to pieces in 1732.

Moreover in the great fresco which Simone Memmi painted in the beautiful Spanish Chapel in their Cloister these same monks celebrated their prowess by representing themselves in the form of black and white dogs (*Domini-cani*, or dogs of the Lord), devouring brown wolves, which emblemize the heretics.

As for the red-cross banner which inflamed their zeal, they still preserve it among their relics in the Sacristy of Santa Maria Novella, and on the day of St. Peter Martyr, April 29th, they show it to the devout congregation. For our eloquent Fra Pietro was no other than the Lombard martyr who died writing "Credo" on the sand with his blood. He had been nominated Inquisitor after the death of Fra Ruggiero Calcagni, who had filled that office so fiercely at the time of the Paterini crusade, but he did not reside in Florence.

Savonarola says, in one of his sermons, that Peter Martyr owed his death, which took place in 1252, between Como and Milan, to some of the Paterini who had fled to Lombardy after the persecutions in Florence.

His memory was kept green in the city. On the outer wall of the Bigallo near the scene of his preaching, Taddeo Gaddi (or as modern critics say Pietro Chellini) painted two frescoes, remains of which are still to be seen. In one Fra Pietro is giving the twelve red-cross banners to the twelve knights of the Order of Santa Maria Novella, after their victory; and in the other he is preaching his crusade. The painter rather fails in expression here, for the listeners

do not seem in the least excited; indeed, the chief part of them are women. There was also, so Rossi says, an old relief in a wall in Via de' Cenni, representing the martyrdom, or rather assassination of Peter Martyr.

After the battles of the Paterini were over, these twelve knights turned their attention to works of charity, and became Captains of the Bigallo, founding the orphanage, and building the pretty little Oratory on which Taddeo Gaddi has represented them receiving their standards.

The Bigallo was built on the site of a tall tower, which was named the "Guarda Morto," because it overlooked what was then the burial ground, around and in the Baptistery.

In 1248, a few years after the crusade of Peter Martyr, the Ghibellines were left masters of the city, having exiled the Guelphs, and they determined to cut down all the towers of the Guelphic party. They decided that the tall "Guarda Morto" of the Adimari should also come down, and so arranged that it should fall on the Baptistery and crush it, for that being the Guelphic meeting-place, they had a special spite against it. So they undermined the tower in such a way that as soon as the temporary props were burnt away it should fall as they designed; "but," says old Giovanni Villani (Lib. VI, cap. 34), "having burnt the props, as it pleased God and Messer Giovanni (St. John) the tower fell in the middle of the piazza, and it was manifest that the building turned round to avoid falling as they ordained."

Most likely Niccolò Pisano, who directed the enter-

prise, was the *Deux ex machina* in this mysterious failure of the laws of physics. He was an artist, and would have respected the beautiful work of Arnolfo, in the marble casing lately put over the old temple of Mars, as much as he would have wished to preserve a monument of Roman "Florentia." No doubt he managed his supports cleverly enough to save the Baptistery.

VII.

A STORY OF PIAZZA DEI MOZZI

(A. D. 1273)

The Piazza dei Mozzi is on the Oltr'Arno side of the Ponte alle Grazie. The Palace of Messer Tommaso dei Mozzi is still standing, though it has been restored by the Princess Carolath Beuthen. Its gardens extend far up the hill toward San Giorgio, and are beautifully laid out with walks, drives and shrubberies. At the date of our stories, and up to the 15th century, the Arno was not embanked at this part, and all the portion now known as Via dei Renai (Street of the Sandmen) was actually occupied by the sandbanks in the bed of the river. The bridge had then two more arches on that side.

It was this wide bed of sand before Palazzo Mozzi, which was chosen by Pope Gregory X as the place for his peace-meeting in 1273, as we here relate.

THE GREAT PEACE-MAKING

The Mozzi were an influential family in the early Republic. They were rich bankers, and for some centuries acted as "Treasurers to the Pope," it being their office to collect the papal offerings, tithes, and taxes, and otherwise to administer the papal estates.

When the papal Court was held at Avignon, the Mozzi had a branch bank there, and this is the era to which the next quaint story of "Cocchio of the Hawk" belongs.

The family had a great love of wealth. Dante (*Inferno*, XIII, 143-151) refers to a certain Rocco dei Mozzi, who, having dissipated his estate, hung himself to escape the mortifications of poverty. The great poet also mentions, and not with esteem, the Bishop Andrea dei Mozzi, who was transferred to the See of Vicenza in 1294.

The Mozzi being in a manner the Pope's representatives in Florence, their palace was usually chosen as a residence by any pontiff, nuncio or church dignitary, who chanced to visit Florence; generally, some one sent to reconcile warring factions. Such were Piero, brother of King Robert of Naples, who came to make peace in 1314; and the Cardinal of Prato, who failed in a similar mission in 1303.

A succession of papal peace-makers came to the fighting Florentines from a long line of Popes, but the burghers were generally too implacable to be easily induced to shake hands over their quarrels. The greatest effort at pacification was in 1274, when Pope, Emperor, and King all met to superintend the kiss of peace.

Gregory X with all his Court and Cardinals were guests at the Mozzi palace in 1273; and at the same time the Latin Emperor Baldwin, then fleeing from Constantinople, was staying in the Archbishop's palace; both on their way to the Council of Lyons, which was called to consider the means of recovering the Holy

Land. King Charles Ist of Anjou was at the same time lodged in the Frescobaldi palace with its beautiful garden by the Arno.¹ He had come here in 1270 after the Sienese war, to keep the city quiet, and to take the place of his Vicar Conte Guido di Montfort, during the visit of Prince Edward, son of Henry III of England; for after the affair at Viterbo the same walls could certainly not contain the English Prince and the Count.²

The Pope and Emperor liked their quarters so much that they remained all the summer. His Holiness was, however, much depressed at the moral and political state of the city, which was then a house divided against itself. The Ghibellines had been defeated at Montaperti and obliged to succumb to the victorious Guelphs, who had turned them out of the city. They had also lost their hope, the young Conrad of Suabia, whom Charles of Anjou had caused to be beheaded in 1268, just in the moment of his victory over Charles' troops near Laterina. Their leaders Azzolino and Neracozzo degli Uberti were decapitated by order of Charles of Anjou, and though the life of young Conticino Uberti was spared on account of his youth, he soon after died, a prisoner at Capua. If any unlucky Ghibelline had fled for safety to a fortress in the Florentine territory, he was hunted down, and the

¹ Now the normal schools, at the foot of Ponte Santa Trinità. The gardens have now been entirely built over.

² Count Guy was son of Simon de Montfort, whose death by order of Henry III, he revenged by stabbing King Henry's eldest son Prince Henry, in the Cathedral at Viterbo, just as he and his brother Edward were bowed in adoration at the most solemn part of the Mass. The Princes were travelling in Italy, and Prince Edward came on to Florence on his way home, the year after the tragic death of his brother.

sheltering castle destroyed. Within the town, the houses of the Ghibellines were despoiled and deserted, and had been so ever since the battle of Montaperti.

All this grieved good Pope Gregory, who thought the best work he could do during his summer in Florence, would be to make peace within its walls. He therefore sent for deputies of the Ghibellines who had been several years in exile, and on the 2nd of July collected the Florentine people on the banks of the Arno, near the Ponte Rubaconte, where large wooden balconies had been erected for the Royal guests and the Signoria.

And a grand array they made! Here were the Pope and all his Cardinals in purple and lace; King Charles 1st of Anjou and his knights in lily-embroidered brocade, and jewelled caps; the Emperor Baldwin and his courtiers in all the gorgeous array of the East; and Gonfaloniere and Priors melting on that hot day in their scarlet and ermine. Around them surged a vast crowd of astute Florentine faces, most of them set and stubborn.

The Pope pronounced his decree of peace, which he commanded should be maintained under pain of excommunication; and he bade the deputies on each side kiss each other on the mouth, in token of reconciliation. Nor did he end here. The Guelphs were bidden to deliver over to the keeping of King Charles all the Ghibelline forts and possessions they had confiscated; hostages also were taken on both sides, and sent to the Maremma under the guard of Conte Rosso dell'Anguillara.

In commemoration of this auspicious day, the

wealthy Mozzi laid the foundation of a church at the foot of the bridge, which they dedicated to "Saint Gregory," in honor of the Pope who assisted in the ceremony.

The truce did not last long. His Holiness went to visit Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini in Mugello, and scarcely was his back turned than those treacherous Guelphs sent a message to the Ghibelline deputies at their hospice in the city, saying that "if they did not immediately take themselves off, King Charles' Captain of the troops would, at the petition of the Guelph leaders, cut them to pieces."

Whether this were a mere threat, or a real menace, it frightened the Ghibelline envoys, who forthwith fled, and the peace was again broken.

The Pope, on his return from Mugello, was very angry with the King, whom he accused of plotting against him. He launched a terrible interdict on the city, and shook off the dust of his feet against it, as he departed for Lyons. The Emperor and King also went to France about the same time, leaving the city in a turmoil, so the grand peace-making had a very unfortunate ending.

On the Pope's return from the Council, he was obliged to pass by Florence, and not being willing to forego the comforts of Casa Mozzi, nor able, for the sake of his personal sanctity, to enter a city under excommunication, he took off the interdict. As he entered the gates, he re-blessed the town. There was a gay ringing of bells, and saying of masses, celebrations of weddings, christenings, and funerals, but the Ghibellines were not recalled, for the Guelphs

were stubborn, and refused to admit their enemies within the walls. Consequently as Pope Gregory took his sacred person out of Florence, he put on the interdict heavier than before.

In 1303 Casa Mozzi had another papal resident, the Pope's Legate, Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, of whom we make mention in the story of "the great feud" as being sent to reconcile the Cerchi and Donati. This mission also failed, though at the first all seemed to promise well. The Legate was given judicial authority for a year; was well received on his entrance, and a great crowd of Florentines gathered on the Piazza San Giovanni on that March day when he publicly addressed the citizens, and gave them the Pope's commands on the subject of pacification.

The people did their part, the Guelphs kissed the shield of the Uberti, the Ghibellines shook hands with the Guelphs, and all seemed to promise well. Peace smiled upon the Florentines, and they determined to celebrate the occasion by a gorgeous fête on the Arno, which one of the artists of the day designed.

It was given out that "whoever wished for information in regard to the other world, should betake himself to the banks of the Arno near Ponte alla Carraia on the evening of the calends of May."

Thither flocked all Florence, crowding on the river bank, and on the shaky wooden bridge of Carraia. The scene they saw was weird enough; the nether world was revealed in all its awfulness. A lurid light showed the river black as the Styx, and dreadful Charon attended by demons was ferrying successive crews of shades across the blackness, to the scenic Hades

where Pluto and yet more horrible demons reigned. Floating platforms, very cleverly got up, formed the various "bolgie;" indeed had the "Divina Commedia" been written at that time, this morose artist might have been said to give a living illustration of Dante. Who can say that Dante, standing amid the crowd, did not idealize this scenic Inferno, and draw from it an idea for his great work, which was begun soon after this event? The fête went on, the howling of the demons, the shrieking of the lost souls, and the shouts of the spectators made a pandemonium horrible to hear; but it was nothing to the awe-inspiring shrieks which followed, when the wooden bridge, crowded to the very edge, suddenly gave way, and hundreds of citizens were precipitated into the black waters of that awful Inferno.

Thus in grim earnest was that playful invitation carried out, for to many who came that night was it revealed what the next world was like. The astrologers and soothsayers gave their opinion that this affair was a very bad omen indeed, and promised ill for the Cardinal's mission. Indeed it seemed to be the case; for, after this, nothing prospered with him.

Having made all his speeches, the Cardinal proceeded to action, and inaugurated many reforms. For instance, he restored the sixteen Gonfalonieri of companies with their armed militia, and gave the principal public offices to *Popolani*, thus diminishing the power of the *Grandi*. Then he sent for deputations from the exiles, both Guelphs or Neri, and Ghibellines or Bianchi; for by this time the names of the factions were changed. The twelve deputies were lodged in Borgo San Nic-

cold, near the Mozzi palace, where he was living. He often invited them to his rooms, and tried to reconcile them. He even caused matrimonial alliances to be made between members of the opposing factions, but nothing really succeeded. Though he was an emissary of the Pope and should have been a loyal Guelph, he had come originally from a Ghibelline family, and if his policy were a little wavering, it may be accounted for by that fact. However this be, the Guelphs lost faith in him and accused him of holding communication with the Ghibellines at Lucca and Pistoja, who, it was rumoured, were, by his connivance, gathering in Val d'Arno with hostile intent. The Cardinal Legate began to think peace-making a dangerous office. He protested his innocence, but finding his position in Florence insecure, he left his hosts the Mozzi, and fled to Prato. Here he found worse dissensions still; he got blamed on all sides for his interference, and was actually driven out of the town. So he came back to Florence, and fomented the enmity that was always smouldering there against Prato. He formed a party, but even that grew to be suspected, and Florence, fearing what his machinations might mean, also drove him away in her turn. On which he excommunicated both Florence and Prato, and returned to his Papal master. Poor Cardinal Niccolò! a Legate in those days had as many perils as honors, especially if his mission were peace.

We have seen the Mozzi family in their grandeur as the entertainers of Popes and Emperors; we will now show how small great men can be in their amusements, by the story of how Tommaso de' Mozzi played a gigantic practical joke on a certain wit of his acquaint-

ance named Niccolo Amadori, commonly called *Cocchi dell'Astore*, or Cocchi of the Hawk. I here give a free translation of a MS. chronicle (Codex CLVI. Num. 134 *Stroziana*) in the Magliabecchian library. The MS. was written in the 15th century by Gio. Pilli, but might have been copied from an earlier writer. There is no plot in it, but it gives an idea of the true old Florentine humour, which so much oftener showed itself in *burle* (practical jokes), than in the long string of witty utterance which the author of *Romola* puts into the mouths of her citizens.

The time the incident took place was exactly a hundred years after the famous making of unstable peace by Pope Gregory; Thomas, son of Luigi Mozzi, being one of the Priors in 1373. The chronicle is headed:

“How Cocchi of the Hawk went to Avignon in his *zoccoli*¹ without knowing where he was going till he was two miles out from the Port of Pisa.”

Tommaso son of Luigi de' Mozzi of Florence, an extremely humourous man of fine manners and high position, had a relative at Avignon² who was rich and childless. It happened that this relative died, and made his will in Avignon, leaving to the said Tommaso half his substance, the other half being bequeathed to a certain Florentine, his friend.

¹ *Zoccoli* are a kind of wooden-soled slipper with only a toe-piece of leather or ornamented cloth. They were worn in cold or wet weather to protect the hose, and are still used by the poor in some parts of Tuscany.

² As we have said before, the Mozzi were the Treasurers to the Papal estate, and as at this time the Pope resided at Avignon, the Mozzi had a branch bank there, which was managed by one of the family.

Now this Florentine being present at the death and proving of his friend's will, acted as executor; and took into his hands all the legacies and properties, belonging to both Tommaso and himself, intending to keep them all, and send nothing to Tommaso. And when Messer Tommaso wrote, desiring him to send his share of the inheritance to him in Florence, he replied contemptuously that the defunct "had given away and squandered all his property, so that there was nothing to inherit." But Tommaso was informed by many of his friends at Avignon, that this was not the case; and that the heritage was large, but that the Florentine had taken it all for himself. Therefore Messer Tommaso decided to go to Avignon, and bring the man to reason; peaceably if possible, if not, he would go to law about it. He straightway wrote to a friend at Pisa to let him know when a ship was sailing for Boccio in Provence, as he wanted to go to Avignon. And the Florentine at Pisa wrote word that a ship from Provence was in the harbour, that it was a good ship, and would shortly sail for Boccio.

On this Tommaso dispatched his valise, and decided that he and his servant would walk to Pisa. Rising betimes one morning he took his way, and the day being cold he put on his *zoccoli*.

Now as he went out of his house he saw his neighbour Niccolo, son of Francesco Amadori, seated in his door-way, and a whim suddenly took him.

He said to his servant: "I have a mind to take *Cocchi dell'Astore* to Avignon with us." Niccolo was called "*dell'Astore*" because he kept a pet hawk, and being a famous falconer he frequently went out

hawking with gentlemen. He had no wife, and lived more in other folks' houses than his own. He was humourous, lively and as sharp as a fox; a little thin man who liked to be thought knowing.

As Tommaso therefore passed by he said: "Come with me a little way."

"Where?" asked Cocchi, and Tommaso said: "It is Thursday, and market-day at Monticelli, outside the San Frediano gate. I want to buy some oxen for my peasants."

"Let us go," said Cocchi, and so the two of them walked off in their *zoccoli*.

Arrived at Monticelli Tommaso looked at many oxen, and asked their price, offering so much less that no one accepted his offers; then he said to Cocchi: "I hear a man named Maschio, at Casellina has a fine pair of oxen that will suit me better in price. Let us go there."

"But," replied Cocchi, "we shall not be home to breakfast at eight o'clock."

"Oh! never mind that. I sent my people word by Michele Dietani the cattle-merchant, who lives in Borgo San Niccolò, that they were not to expect us."

"Let us go then," said Cocchi.

Arrived at Casellina, Tommaso went in to speak to the host of the inn, and came out saying that the oxen had been sold last evening.

"That is over," said Cocchi, "we will go back."

But Tommaso bade the host bring out some good wine, and food, and while they were drinking there passed a carrier from Pisa whom Tommaso knew.

He called him by name, offered him some wine, and while he drank it, wrote a letter saying "he had taken Cocchi of the Hawk to Avignon with him, and they were to inform his household of the fact."

Then turning to Cocchi he said: "I have some business to transact at Lastra di Signa; as we are so far, and the weather is good, let us go on."

Said the other: "How about my breakfast at home?" and Tommaso replied: "I have written by the carrier that they are not to expect us."

"Let us go," quoth Cocchi.

Arrived at Lastra, Tommaso being a good talker drew aside one man after another, and made believe to do a great deal of business, after which he ordered dinner. Having eaten, Tommaso settled with the host, and then they took their way towards Montelupo.

Says Cocchi: "Where are you going?" and Tommaso began to laugh, saying: "My good Cocchi, you have been very kind to bear me company; if you had not come, I should have died of melancholy. I must go on to Empoli, come with me, there's a good man."

Quoth Cocchi: "I swear to *Domeniddio*, you have treated me well so far, I will go with you," and as they had to go up the hill, he took off his wooden slippers,¹ and hung them at his waist. But Tommaso, taking off his own, gave both pairs to his servant to carry.

At Empoli they supped and slept at the hostelry.

Next morning Tommaso made believe as usual to

¹ As the *zoccolo* has no leather at the heel, being only a half-shoe, it would be a great hindrance in walking up hill.

do a great deal of business, then, having paid the host, he said to Cocchi: "Come along," and went off towards Santa Gonda.

"But this is not the way," cried Cocchi.

"I will confess to you, Cocchi. I have vowed a pilgrimage to Cigoli, and this is the business which has brought me here."

Quoth Cocchi: "I vow to the Lord that you have brought me here by fraud. Did your letter say we were going to Cigoli? Are you sure you wrote so plainly, that they won't send the Misericordia brothers to seek me?"

Tommaso began to laugh, and so did his servant, but Niccolo was reassured till they reached the road that led to Cigoli, when Tommaso took the one to Pisa instead.

"Holà! where are you going?" cried Cocchi, "this is not the road to the shrine.¹"

"Well, you see Cocchi, as we have got so far, we may as well go on to Pisa. In fact I am under no vows at all, but I have business there, and you have never seen the city. You shall be at no expense, and we will enjoy ourselves."

"I rather wondered at your vows, and your pilgrimage," returned Cocchi, "for I know well enough you believe in nothing above the roof of your house, and are always playing pranks upon honest folk. A few lies more or less do not seem to trouble you. Well! Let us go, lest you die of melancholy...."

¹ Sacchetti in his letters says there was once a miraculous shrine of the Madonna at Cigoli, to which many pilgrimages were made.

(Having reached Pisa, Mozzi took his Florentine friend there, and the captain of the ship into his confidence, and they both fell into the fun of the thing.)

Next morning Tommaso called Cocchi and said: "I am going about my business, do you go and see all the sights of Pisa with these good Florentines." And putting his hand in his purse, he gave him twenty-four *grossi*, adding:

"I know you did not come provided. Go and amuse yourself. I shall expect you at eight o'clock to supper."

And so they stayed several days, till the ship's captain, rising one morning and finding a fair wind, said to Tommaso: "The weather is just made for us. I will go to the port and prepare to embark."

When he was gone, Tommaso said to his friend:

"Have you ever been in the harbour? ¹ Let us go and see the ships;" and Cocchi replied: "It will give me great pleasure, for I have never seen salt water, nor any kind of ship," and so in their *zoccoli* they departed, the Florentines at Pisa who were in the joke, accompanying them with hilarity. They first boarded a large vessel, where they were offered wine and comfits; and then went to the Provençal ship, where the captain said: "Come and take a cup of wine with me, and bid me also God-speed, or I shall be jealous of those other captains."

Tommaso said: "Willingly will we do so."

Now while they eat and drank, the mariners quietly hoisted sail.

¹ The harbour of Pisa was some miles out of the city at the mouth of the Arno.

"Messer ship-master," asked Cocchi, "what are you doing?"

"Only trying how the new sail runs up."

But when the new sail was up, it began to fill out with wind, the sailors said their prayers according to custom, and the ship began to move. Now as Cocchi was placed with his back to the land, he did not notice that they were moving, but sat comfortably drinking his wine. At last, looking back and seeing they had left Pisa behind them, he began to scream: "Where are we going? Stop, stop, put me on land."

Tommaso the captain and sailors nearly fell down with merriment, on which Niccolo rushed at Tommaso, shrieking:

"Traitor, I will kill you if you don't put me on land directly."

Tommaso turned to the captain:

"Pray put this fellow on land before I'm a dead man," and the ship-master with a laugh replied:

"Oh no, I intend to take him with me to Provence."

"You see, Cocchi," said Tommaso, you have to go with me to Avignon. Be at peace. You shall neither have to pay ship, nor host, nor customs, and after we have well enjoyed ourselves, I will bring you back to Florence without the expense of a *quat-trino*," and Cocchi perforce resigned himself to the inevitable.

After a while Messer Mozzi asked: "But how about your hawk?"

Quoth Cocchi: "I left him with Matteo Tolosini.

Do you think I should be here if I had left my hawk alone? I should have thrown myself into the sea to get home again."

So they began to talk.

"May I inquire," asked Cocchi, "what this is to end in? Are we going to the Holy Sepulchre or to St. Jago?"

"We are going to Boccoli and Avignon. This is the real truth."

"I don't believe it. You are going to take me off to Jerusalem with your pranks and fibs." Then Cocchi sighed a great sigh and comically apostrophized himself: "Ah, Niccolo! you thought yourself so wise and knowing and now you have let yourself be carried to Provence in *zoccoli* as if you were a baby, and you forty-five good years of age!"

.....

When they reached Avignon they stayed in the house of Mozzi's friend Apardo Alamanni.

"There are so many Florentines here," remarked Tommaso to Cocchi, "that you will think you are in Mercato Nuovo. Do just what you like all day, and return at night to sup and sleep here," and he gave him two gold florins that he might drink good wine with his friends.

They stayed eight days, at the end of which Tommaso finding he could not obtain his rights, decided to go to law. So he paid Cocchi's passage back to Pisa, and gave him eight florins besides. He had a fair voyage and in a few days landed at Pisa. (Here we will translate the old chronicler again.)

"Here he put on his *zoccoli*, and from Pisa still

in his wooden slippers he arrived at Florence. And Fortune was so kind to him that never in all this time did a drop of rain fall, neither did the weather change, till he got safely home to Florence."

The Mozzi kept up their prestige for many centuries. They were Gonfalonieri, and ambassadors, and always wealthy. It was a Senator Mozzi who wrote to the Ambassador of France, to refuse, on the part of his country, to give up the Venus de' Medici to Napoleon Ist.¹

¹ See *Storia civile della Toscana*, vol. III, pag. 243^{bis}.

VIII.

A STORY OF PIAZZA SANTA FELICITA.

(A. D. 1283)

The Piazza Santa Felicita is just across the old bridge at the beginning of Via Guicciardini. The Church dates from the 11th century, when the Benedictines built it for their convent which was close by. It was restored in 1736 by Ruggeri in a debased Renaissance style.

It is said that the ill-fated marriage of Buondelmonte, which we have related in the third story, took place in this Church. The powerful family of the Rossi had their houses on the opposite side of the piazza to the convent; one of them still preserves portions of the ancient architecture. Being so near the Pitti Palace, the Church of Santa Felicita was in the 17th and 18th centuries the Grand-ducal chapel. Ferdinand 1st erected in it a Court gallery which his family and suite could enter from the passage leading from the Uffizi to the palace. Most of the older nobility of Florence have their chapels here.

*THE COURT OF LOVE AND HAPPINESS*¹

A curious glimpse of the brighter side of fierce mediæval life, softened by the gentle touch of chivalry, is obtained from a graphic chapter of Villani, headed:

¹ Told on the authority of Giov. Villani, lib. VII, cap. 88.

“ How a noble Court was inaugurated in the city of Florence, and how folks made holiday all dressed in white. ”

It was in the summer of the year 1283, when the Florentines having recovered their spirits after the flood and famine of the previous year, and seeing that their city had never been so happy and peaceful, so rich in merchandise, or so free from foes, gave themselves up to joy and feasting; and determined to keep their patron Saint's day with unusual honors.

It would have been difficult for any but a fête-loving Florentine to conceive any new festivity to add to the ones already crowded into the summer festival of St. John Baptist, June, 24th. From the time when devout Queen Theodelinda gave the guardianship of the city to St. John instead of to Mars, that day had been the greatest fête of the year.

Goro Dati, who lived about the year 1400, gives an account of the customs used in his day; and as they had already become traditional, we may presume them to have been similar in the preceding century. The primal nucleus of grandeur and ceremony was the Piazza of the Signoria, where the festive crowd collected from the early hours of the day. A hundred turrets were brought, either on wheeled cars, or carried by men who walked invisible within them, and were placed all round the Piazza. Their generic name was “ ceri, ” and they were made of pasteboard and wax, gilded and painted, or with figures modelled in relief. Some of them were adorned with trees and birds, “ which, ” says Dati, “ delight the eyes and the heart. ” Around others were depicted knights

on horseback, or groups of armed men; on others were garlanded youths dancing and singing.

The *Ringhiera*¹ of the Palace was gaily draped and surrounded by 100 gilded poles, each with an iron ring on it. These rings were intended to hold the standards of all towns which paid tribute to Florence.

The ceremonies of the day began with homage to the Signoria, who were in full force on the *Ringhiera*, a compact mass of scarlet and ermine. On Midsummer day, imagine it! First the Captains of the Guelph party rode by in state with all their cavaliers, together with the foreign Ambassadors and Princes then in the city. The gonfalon (or flag) of the Guelph party was carried by a squire, mounted on a palfrey covered with a rich housing of white cloth, on which the Guelphic arms were embroidered in gold. Next came numberless deputations from tributary cities, each with its standard of rich velvet, lined with either silk or ermine. These standards were temporarily placed, each in one of the 100 rings on the poles before the Signoria. Then the "magnificent Lords," clad in scarlet descended from the *Ringhiera*, and led the whole procession to the Baptistery, where the standards and turrets were offered at the shrine of the patron Saint. They were placed round the church and altar, those of the previous year being taken away, and afterwards sold by public auction.

¹ The *Ringhiera* was the outer platform of the Palazzo Vecchio, from which the newly elected Gonfaloniere addressed the people, and from which the decrees of the Council were announced to the populace. The *Ringhiera* was demolished and replaced by steps during the occupation by Napoleon, A. D. 1809 to 1812.

After this, offerings of wax candles were made by citizens and *contadini*; the Masters of the Mint making the first offering, and bringing their candles in a richly ornate car drawn by two white oxen, whose coverings bore the arms of the *Zecca*. The "Signori della Zecca," were accompanied by 400 venerable men, members of the exchange, and the *Arte di Calimala*.

Next, the Priors and Colleagues offered their waxen tribute, and then the Podestà, Captain and Esecutore did the same. After them came the *corsieri*, or owners of the horses that were to run in the day's "Palio," then the Flemings, and men of Brabant, who were the chief weavers of wool, and twelve prisoners who had been released on the auspicious day, also made thank-offerings. Lastly the *oi polloi*, crowds of citizens; burghers in the dignified lucco; richly dressed dames in brocade; working men in leather jerkins; and women in camlet; all jostled one another in endeavours to reach the altar with their candles.¹

After this, everybody retired from the hot streets, and the mid-day meal took place. Cooks and housewives found this fête rather a hardworking day, "for," says our Chronicler, "as I have told you, there are on that day weddings and grand feasts all over the city, with much piping and dancing, music and singing, and such merry-making, joy, and adornment, that it would seem the land was the land of Paradise."

¹ By this time the semi-pagan ceremony of lighting the household shrine, from the altar of the Baptistery (see page 11), was obsolete. People now only offered their candles to the Saint.

In the afternoon the "Palio" was run. Among the old Florentines no national ceremony or fête took place, but a Palio was sure to be on the programme. If a victory were won over Prato, Lucca or Siena, a Palio celebrated it, and if the race could be held under the very walls of the vanquished, it added piquancy to the sport. The victory of Campaldino; the entry of Charles of Valois; and the expulsion of the tyrant Duke of Athens, were all celebrated by a Palio, and an annual commemoration was kept up for centuries after.

The fête of a patron Saint offered as good an occasion for a Palio as a victory, and till the present century, races with riderless horses were run on the days of St. John Baptist, St. Peter and St. Victor.

The race-course for the Palio was from Porta alla Croce, to Porta al Prato, through the Corso and Via degli Albizi, Vigna Nuova and Borgognissanti. The Signoria generally went in official state to one of the houses of the Albizzi, and watched the race from a terrace draped with red velvet.¹ The horses had gilded trappings, and housings of cloth of gold, and when they started, several flags with the arms and colors of their owners were run up from a tower at the starting point. The owner of the winning steed won the "Palio," which was a rich standard of velvet and gold lined with ermine. It was carried on a triumphal car adorned with four carved lions, and drawn by two horses whose housings bore the ensign of the Commune. All Florence turned out to witness

¹ In later times the Grand Dukes watched it from a house on the Prato, near the goal.

the Palio. Ladies found seats in the windows or balconies of friends' houses, the populace made a dense crowd on each side of the street, leaving the galloping steeds very little room to run, and frequently putting their own limbs into jeopardy.¹

Now having shewn you how the Florentines were wont to keep the fête of their guardian Saint, we will return to our year 1283 when some enterprising young men of the Rossi family, who lived next the Benedictine convent on Piazza Santa Felicita, were inspired with the idea of adding a still greater lustre to St. John's day, by inaugurating the "Court of Love and Happiness," a chivalric institution whose aims should be pure and light as their white robes, and give an added touch of joy to the city.

Their idea was warmly taken up by the *festa-loving* people, and ere long a brigade of a thousand white-robed men was enrolled under a leader, probably one of the Rossi, called the "Lord of Love." Love in this case seems synonymous with happiness and gaiety, for the white cavaliers dedicated themselves entirely to courtesy and pleasure. They gave balls, in which knights and ladies danced with the grace that belonged to the age of chivalry; they paraded the city in bands, singing and playing musical instruments; and they met at festive suppers and feasts. "The which Court," says quaint Villani, "lasted for two months, and was the most noble and renowned that ever was held in Florence, or Tus-

¹ The last remnants of a Palio are the races on the Piazza at Siena, which are run on their great fête in August, and the *Corso dei Barberi* of the Roman Carnival. In Florence they have been discontinued for the last 30 years.

cany. And there came to it from divers parts and many countries, gentle courtiers, minstrels, and troubadours, and all were hospitably received and honorably entertained. And no strangers of renown passed through Florence, but they were forthwith invited to the Court of Love; and after being entertained, were escorted by the white knights through the city, and even beyond it, as they had need."

This Court was very probably the inspirer of Boccaccio in his romance of the ten pleasure-loving young people; and seems also to have given Simone Memmi, or whoever was the artist of the fresco in the Spanish chapel, an idea for his group of knights and dames in the garden of pleasure, which was painted about twenty years later.

Whether the Court of Love and Happiness fostered a love of display among the Florentine ladies, I know not, but it is true that in 1299, Fuccio Ferrucci being Gonfaloniere, a law was passed by the Commune imposing a fine of 30 lire on women who wore ornaments of gold, silver or jewels. Neither can I tell whether the custom of holding public dances in the streets dates previous to the Court of Love. That it was usual after it, is certain, for our eleventh story of the great feud begins with maidens merrily dancing on a summer evening upon the Piazza Santa Trinità.

IX.

A STORY OF BORGOGNISSANTI

(A. D. 1290)

This street had a large share in the early history of the Republic, being the head quarters of the *Arte della Lana* (Guild of the Wool merchants) which had sovereign influence in Florence up to the 14th century. There existed a kind of guild as early as 1204,¹ but the manufacture was in a very primitive state till, in 1239, the monks of the Umiliati (an order founded by Barbarossa in Alexandria in 1184) came to Florence. In those days monks were useful members of society, some orders gave themselves to study and art, others to science and trade. The Umiliati were famous as dressers of wool. The Commune received them gladly, and gave them permission to build their convent just outside the town, in the Borgo, or suburb near the Arno. They first used as their chapel the little Church dedicated to All Saints, and so the street became known as Borgognissanti. By the 14th century the Umiliati had taught the Florentines so much in the art of dressing wool, and Rucellai had introduced such improvement in that of dyeing it, that the *Arte della Lana* was paramount in the city, and Florentine cloth was famous all over Europe.

All the chief woollen factories were in or near Borgognissanti, and it was for their convenience that the canal now

¹ Scipio Ammirato says the Consuls of the *Arte della Lana* signed a treaty of peace between Florence and Siena in 1204.

covered over in Via Magenta was made, to bring the waters of the Mugnone as well as the Arno to the vats of the wool-dyers.

In 1564 the Franciscan monks of Santa Caterina came to take the place of the Umiliati in Borgognissanti: in fact they changed convents with them. By this time the Church, convent and factories had all been taken within the city walls, and were no longer a suburb.

HOW A WOOL-CARDER WENT

A-JOUSTING ¹

Charlemagne's creation of an order of chivalry in Florence, followed by other knightly orders, had produced its natural result on the tone of society. Personal strength, physical courage, and expertness in the use of arms became the chief aims of life in the young nobles. Chivalresque exercises were all the fashion; young men were, in those times, masterly riders, fencers, and jousters; the muscles, the hand and the eye were all trained to the utmost. Nor was this fine physical education limited to the nobles. In a city ruled by burghers, and whose only army was a civic militia composed of tradesmen and artisans, military exercises were encouraged among all classes. It required the aristocratic government of the 16th century to deprive the burgher of the right to use his sword and lance. In the early days of the

¹ Told, on the authority of Sacchetti, *Novella 64*, and Manni, *Veglie Piacevoli*, tomo V. p. 3.

Republic, Florence had of course her lists for the holding of jousts. This burgher's "Field of the cloth of Gold" was situated at Peretola, three miles out of Florence from the Porta al Prato. Unless the lists were specially engaged for a knightly tournament, or one of those equestrian combats which were often held with great magnificence, they were open to all, as a kind of jousting school or exercise ground, and we find that as early as 1260 it was the custom of young Florentines to go to Peretola on fête-days, and practise either at the "Saracino," or at tilting with the lance. There seems to have been a kind of armourer and *costumier* near the field, by whom those urban young men, who not being born cavaliers, had no knightly outfit of their own, could be equipped in arms and armour obtained for the day on hire. The first mention we have of the lists at Peretola is a comic one, shewing how the spirit of chivalry had penetrated all classes.

Agnolo di Gherardo was a wool-carder of diminutive stature, and mature age, who about the year 1290 worked in the factory of the Rondinelli. He was an original, a "*nuovo pesce*" (new fish) as the quaint language of the old chronicler has it; one of those half foolish jesters who are created to be the butt of their neighbours. Of course such a man soon got a nickname, and Agnolo was accordingly known among his compeers as Ser Benghi.¹ He was a great mimic, and had achieved marked success in taking off the

¹ *Ser* was the distinguishing title of a notary. For the original Ser Benghi see Padre Idelfonso, *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, tome XVII, p. 168.

speech and manner of a worthy lawyer, named Ser Benghi.

He had moreover a great ambition to emulate his betters, besides his talent for imitating them. Even in his old age this youthful ambition had not palled, for, one day, having seen a number of gay young men set off to the jousts at Peretola, he was moved by an irresistible desire to do likewise, in spite of his seventy years, his low estate and non-military training.

The principal wool-factories were in Borgognissanti,¹ and in the same street there lived a certain stable-keeper nicknamed Tinta, who hired out his horses to young men of equestrian proclivities.

Probably when old "Ser Benghi" applied for the hire of a steed, the best of the stud were already engaged for the jousts of the day; it is equally probable that Tinta preferred not to trust the "*nuovo pesce*" with a good palfrey; certain it is the old man only obtained a tall bony Rosinante, so thin and gaunt that it was a "perfect picture of famine." Mounted on this animal, with a saddle whose bows came up to his shoulders (he being a very little old man), Ser Benghi rode off straight to Peretola.

Arrived at the lists he entered his name for a match at the *Saracino*,—the ancient sport of riding with a lance at the effigy of a Saracen's head swung on a revolving pole. Then he went to the armour keeper, and casting off his artisan's suit of green baize, he

¹ A remnant of their occupation exists still in the *gora*, or canal, now covered over in Via Magenta. They made this conduit from the Mugnone to the Arno, as certain phases of the art of wool-dyeing required water of two different qualities.

armed himself for the fray. In the matter of armour he came off as ill suited as in his choice of a horse. The cuirass, not being made for so small a man, rattled loosely around him, and the helmet came so far over his face, that when mounted, he disappeared altogether, and presented the appearance, of a helmet stuck on a high pointed saddle-bow. The heroic sentiment which seems inseparable from helmet and cuirass, lance and sword, filled the old workman's soul with glory. Feeling very like a hero, albeit a rather uncomfortable one, he took lance in hand and rode out into the lists, a figure so grotesque that the well-mounted cavaliers all laughed, and a feminine ripple of mirth was heard from under the awning of the ladies' seats.

Alas! Ser Benghi was not destined to win his tardy laurels that day. One of his fellow woolcarders having a tease about him, was moved to place it slyly beneath the tail of the gaunt charger. No sooner had Ser Benghi, on knightly prowess intent, entered the field, than the creature feeling an uncomfortable pricking behind, began to leap about, jolting poor Agnolo so that his armour rattled again; then, instead of making an assault, wheeled round, galloped clean out of the lists, and took the road to Florence.

The unlucky Cavalier, whose lance soon dropped from his hand, was jolted in his loose armour till the cuirass was now above his shoulders, and now cutting into his thighs, and the helm fell over his nose so that he could not see anything. In vain he tried blindly to rein in his steed; the invisible pricking in a spot where he had never before felt spur, drove the animal



FIRENZE - PORTA AL PRATO

GIANNINI - FIREN

forward in a mad career over the three miles of dusty road to the city.

The guards stood at the gate, but the rider dashed through before they could frame the words "Who goes there? stop!" All they saw was a wild bony old horse with a rattling suit of armour upon him. Boys rushed hallooing after him, the women ran to their doors and windows, shrilling: "What, in the Madonna's name, is all this clatter about? But they saw very little; the horse dashed up Borgognissanti, past the factory in which his rider was wont to pass less painful days, and into the stable of his owner, with a screaming populace behind, trying to avoid his vicious kicks. Some poked the rider with sticks, others pricked him with forks, while a pitiful voice from under the helmet shrieked out: "*Oi, oi!* let me get down." As his worst beast plunged into the stall, the stablekeeper caught hold of the reins and cried: "Who, in the name of all the furies, are you?" for he could see no semblance of a man. Agnolo, groaning furiously, could not answer a word till Tinta began to unbuckle the helmet, when a face like death was revealed, the drawn lips sighing: "*Oi, oi!* be gentle, or I shall die."

When his head was with difficulty got out of the helmet, his face was like the face of a dead man. They could scarcely get him down from the saddle, and even then he could not stand, but had to be carried to the stable-keeper's house and laid on the bed. The latter soon found out the trick that had been played, and willing to share in the fun, he went to the room where the unlucky man was groaning, and said: "Oh, Ser Benghi, I little thought you were such an Orlando.

You ought to have told me when you hired my horse that you were going to the *giostra*. This one is not accustomed to jousting, and you have entirely ruined him. You will have to pay heavy damages."

Quoth Agnolo: "Nay, it is your wretched screw that has ruined me. Cursed be the hour I mounted him! If I had had a proper steed I should have done such deeds of prowess as would have won me everlasting fame. For the love of God send over to Peretola for my clothes, and tell those young men what a misfortune I have had."

A messenger was sent, and the practical jokers accompanied him back to continue their amusement.

"Well, Ser Benghi!" they cried jovially, "what news? Are you dead or alive?"

"Ah! my friends," said Agnolo, "I little thought I should see you again. That cursed horse has murdered me, I never rode a worse one;" and the youth of the teasle laughed mightily. "Yes," continued the sufferer, "I felt just like the wool dyer's water-pail" (*la secchia de' vagellari*) "that is always going up or down. I must have broken both saddle and armour with my shaking. As for the helmet, it knocked so on the saddle-bow that I wonder there is a bit of it left."

The fallen hero got into his clothes as well as he could, and when the evening was sufficiently dark, he was assisted home by his friends, who knocked so furiously at the house-door, that his wife came running out in alarm. Seeing Agnolo in such a state that he could not stand alone, she began to shriek in her turn: "Oh! husband mine, what wretch has done you this hurt."

"Do not be alarmed, Madonna, there is no great harm done," said the friends, and leaving him on the door-step they hurried away to have their laugh out.

The good woman embraced her spouse and begged to be told what had happened, but all he was able to say was "Help me to bed, for mercy's sake."

When she discovered that he was so covered with bruises that his flesh looked like a slab of porphyry, she would no longer be put off, and Agnolo had to confess that he, a respectable wool-carder of seventy years of age, had been disporting himself in the lists like a giddy young fellow of nineteen.

Monna Gherardo, who was a sensible woman, gave her spouse a lecture, the like of which he had never heard in his life, ending with: "You must have lost your wits in good earnest this time. Get to bed, do, before the street-boys get hold of the story, and tease the life out of you."

"My good wife," sighed Agnolo, "I am only too willing to go to bed, but for the love of Heaven hold your tongue, for I am half dead of clatter already," and she retorted cruelly: "I wish you had been quite dead and in your grave before you made such a fool of yourself."

"Am I the first man that ever went into a jousting-field?" asked Agnolo, plucking up a little spirit.

But Monna Gherardo shut him up with a contemptuous: "Keep to your wool-combing, my good man, with the other *ciompi*, your equals, and leave tournaments to those who know how to sit a horse."

Ser Benghi never again entered the lists.

I do not know when the jousting-field at Peretola

became disused, but in the next century jousts and tournaments took a different standing. They seem to have been the exclusive privilege of the rich and noble; probably the cause for this was in the gradual decay of the town-militia under the innovation of the mercenary army, and in the growing tendency to the supremacy of the nobles. Indeed in the 15th and 16th centuries none but nobles and the military were allowed to carry arms, and it required a wealthy man to take part in a *giostra*.

There was a famous joust in 1497, in which Benedetto Salvatori, nephew of the renowned Messer Coluccio, used 170 lbs of silver in the adornment of the trappings of his two horses. The silver mountings were all adorned by Antonio Pollaiuolo with heads and figures in relief, smalto, or intaglio. The horse-cloths were worked with pearls, Salvatori's own dress being embroidered with 30 lbs of fine pearls, which cost about 5000 florins. His horse Scozzone, the finest on the field, had been bought from an Englishman at the cost of 266 florins.

After this, tournaments with real arms were put down by the Sacred Canons, and were afterwards only used as games, on the occasion of a public festival or princely marriage. Such a tournament was that immortalized by Politian and Luigi Pulci, who each sang the glories of one of the brothers, when Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici jousted together on Piazza Santa Croce, at the time of Lorenzo's marriage with Clarice Orsini; and such was the great *giostra* of the Saracen, got up on the same Piazza, to celebrate Bianca Cappello's marriage on May 24th, 1589, when

there were twenty-two *sfide* (challenges) of three careers each. The cavaliers were dressed as classical heroes, in magnificent costumes; and among them were such names as Don Cesare d'Este, Virginio Orsini, Alfonso Piccolomini, Annibale Rovere. The "Mantenitori" were his Excellency Don Pietro de' Medici, and two "Illustrissimi" of the Salviati and Botti families.

A prize was awarded after each *sfida*; the 1st prize being thirty bosses of gold (probably for horse-trappings); the 2nd a cameo set in rubies; the others, various objects of jewellery, either for knight or dame.

From this it will be seen that the *giostra* and the tournament had become quite a different thing in the time of the Medici to what they were when every youth in republican Florence trained himself in military exercises to make his arm worthy to combat for her freedom.

X.

A STORY OF ST. PIER SCHERAGGIO.

(A. D. 1293-4)

In these days you may look in vain for this Church. It was partly pulled down to make room for Vasari's Uffizi Gallery in 1560, and was entirely suppressed in 1782. At one time it was the State Church. The *carroccio*, that war fetish of the ancient Florentines, was kept there; it was used as the place for public orations, and also for the meeting of the civic councils, before the Palazzo Vecchio was finished. An ancient marble *ambone* or pulpit which once stood there, is now to be seen in the little Church of San Leonardo in Arcetri, at the top of the Costa San Giorgio.

The form of the Church was that of the Roman Basilica as described by Vitruvius, and indeed the early Florentines used it more as a Forum than a Church.

*THE MAN WHO LOVED JUSTICE.*¹

It was after the battle of Campaldino, when the Ghibellines had returned to Florence flushed with victory, and more overbearing than ever, that Giano della Bella came to the front as champion for the oppressed *popolani* against the *grandi*. He was a noble and wise man of good birth, his family being one of

¹ Borrowed from the chronicle of Dino Compagni, an actor in the scenes.

the six to whom the Marquis Hugh had given his arms in the 10th century. He bore them with a *fregio* of gold (*bordure d'or*).¹

Giano was one of the Priors in February 1292; his watchword was justice, and seeing that the balance of power was very uneven, he proposed some fundamental reforms. The chief of them was the creation of a Gonfaloniere of Justice, or head of the Republic, who was to be elected from the Priors, and to have at his disposal a civic militia of 1000 armed men. The motion was carried, Baldo Ruffoli was elected as first Gonfaloniere, and a long line of successors, including all the most eminent men of the Republic, followed him in office for two or three hundred years.

It is said that Giano had a personal reason for his enmity to the *grandi*. Berto Frescobaldi was one day disputing with him on some matter of business, when he insolently took Giano by the nose, and threatened to cut that feature off if he dared to contradict him. This, as well as the endless number of complaints of the nobles which were daily found in the *tamburi*,² may have combined in rousing Giano to active measures.

A great many strict laws were made at Giano's instigation, especially pertaining to the administration of strict justice on all acts of cruelty and oppression. Moreover all the *grandi* or nobles were excluded from public offices.

¹ DANTE, *Par.*, XVI, 27 to 132. See also page 19 of this volume.

² The *tamburi* were a species of letter boxes, one placed under the Loggia of the Podestà's palace, and one on the house of the Captain of the people. They were for the purpose of receiving secret accusations, and no doubt they had a very pernicious influence on society.

That the laws were very severe is admitted even by Dino Compagni, who was Gonfaloniere of Justice in 1293; though he confessed that in due course of the law, he himself had ordered and witnessed the destruction of the houses of the Galligai family, one of whom had killed a man named Ugolino Benivieni. Sometimes the Priors carried out the law openly, and for fear of the people, repaired the damages in secret, as in the case of one of the Buondelmonti, who was condemned for manslaughter. After the Signoria had by public decree destroyed his house, they privately rebuilt it again.

Messer Giano della Bella had certainly released the people from the oppression of the nobles, but in the end his laws did not please either party. The *grandi* found their freedom entirely cut off, and one declared "he dared not even let his horse whisk his tail in the vicinity of a *popolano*;" and the people on whose behalf the laws were made, began to fear they had given Giano too much power. The nobles declared "he only made a show of justice to be able to prosecute his enemies," and the plebs said: "He wanted to rule over everybody, and that his rule was preposterously strict."

The *grandi* wanted him assassinated, but feared the populace. The worst of the people had the same wish, but feared their own party. Dissatisfaction spread, till at length there grew up a wide-spread conspiracy to make him undo himself, as they were afraid to take public measures against him. It had members even amongst the Priors. Dino Compagni, who was one of them, gives substantially the following account:

One day, it was decided to assassinate Giano, but the order was withdrawn for fear of the people. Then the Priors' ingenuity hit on a plan to cause his death by craft. They said: "He is all for justice, let us tell him of the evil deeds of the butchers — they are ferocious and ill disposed men...." The Priors who were in the conspiracy, said to Giano one day when they were about to hold council in the Church of Ognissanti:¹ "You had better look into the malpractices of the butchers (*arte dei beccai*)," and they told him of certain outrages committed by them, especially by one man named Pecora, a very blustering fellow who openly defied the law.

"Let the city perish before I allow such things to be," cried Giano, and decrees were forthwith made against the butchers' guild. Then they instigated him to legislate also against the judges and notaries that administred the laws to their own advantage, regardless of justice.

"We will soon make decrees that shall put a bridle on such malice," said Giano in a fine disdain.

This done, the conspirators secretly told the butchers and notaries that Giano held them in abhorrence, and made new laws against them.

"One day," says Dino, "when I was going to the council in Ognissanti, and Giano was walking in the garden, I revealed to him the conspiracy against him, saying that the conspirators were signing a false decree, the meaning of which was not understood by everybody;

¹ The Palazzo Vecchio was not begun till 1295. It seems from Compagni that before that time this Church was sometimes the meeting-place of the Signoria.

it ruled that every city or fortress which harboured an exile who was unfriendly to the people, should be held as inimical to the Commune; and was framed to give him into the power of the members of the arts he legislated against."

"The city shall perish," exclaimed Giano," before such deeds shall stand," and he went straight into council, where, with more ardour than wisdom, he accused the would-be legislators of conspiracy, threatening them with death. The decree under question was not signed, and the conspirators for the nonce were silenced.

The *grandi* next called a council in the Church of San Jacopo oltr'Arno, and made their plots against him; they too counselled craft rather than open attack, and set to work by innuendoes to cause disaffection among the populace.

Meanwhile his laws still held, and the powerful Corso Donati, who had fought so bravely at Campaldino, fell under their ban. He had made an attack on a certain Simone Galastrone who had offended him. Simone escaped, but some men were killed or wounded on each side, so the case was brought before the "Podestà," who was a Messer Giano from Lucino in Lombardy. One of his colleagues had prepared the evidence, and seeing the case was likely to go against Corso Donati, whom he favoured, he so worded his dictation to the notary who drew up the papers, that the contrary impression was given. This is a practical proof that Giano della Bella's laws to put a bridle on the unfaithfulness of judges and notaries were not unnecessary.

When the Podestà came to hear the case, he, judging by the papers read to him, absolved Donati and condemned Simone. As soon as this judgment was known in the city, a tumult was made. The people thought the Podestà had been bribed; this was confirmed by the indignation of Messer Simone's friends, and soon there was a vast crowd crying out: "Death to the traitor Podestà! To the fire with him!"

The ringleaders of this ferocious demonstration were two men, Taldo della Bella and Baldo dal Borgo, who were more moved by hatred to Corso Donati, than by a strict sense of justice. The rumour of the tumult reached the Priors in their Council, and that lover of justice Giano della Bella, exclaiming: "I shall go and save that Podestà from the wrath of the populace," mounted his horse; thinking that the people for whom he had secured liberty, would no sooner hear his voice than they would obey.

But this time they were deaf to him; doubt had been instilled into them, and they turned their lances even against their champion, so that he had to retreat lest he should be unhorsed. Not even the appearance of the red-robed Priors entering the piazza with their gonfalon flying, could suppress the fury of the populace. They succeeded in burning the door of the Podestà's palace, and robbing him of his horses and goods. The Podestà and his wife fled to a neighbouring house, but the soldiers of his guard were taken prisoners, and then a curious raid was made.

All those citizens who had causes pending in the court of the Podestà, and knew they were on the losing side, set to work to tear up the papers in the notaries'

offices. A quarrelsome lawyer named Baldo degli Ammirati, who was always being sued for one thing or another, was so successful in his reseaches among the deeds, that he destroyed every act which existed against him, so that the cases could never be got up again.

The Podestà and his wife, a beautiful and much admired Lombard lady, heard the yells of the angry crowd, and trembled in their hiding place, fearing every moment would be their last, for if they were discovered they would certainly have been torn to pieces.

The next day came calmer councils, and Giano della Bella's love of justice had a hearing. The Priors decreed that for the credit of the city the goods robbed from the Podestà should be restored, and his full salary paid, after which he departed. But the populace were not satisfied; some were angry against Giano della Bella for stopping them in their lynch law; others accused him and his decrees of being the cause of all the disturbance. The feeling grew so high that on March 5th, 1294, Giano was actually exiled by his colleagues the Priors, and his goods were confiscated, much to the satisfaction of the notaries and butchers.

This was in the time when Gherardo Lupicini was Gonfaloniere of Justice, and it seems to shew that neither people nor Priors were more fair in their judgments than the unlucky Podestà they had driven away; nor more fair in their administration than he whom they exiled—a martyr to Justice.

XI.

STORIES OF THE VIA DEI CERCHI

(A. D. 1300-4)

To find the Via dei Cerchi, go up the Corso (one of the streets leading from Via Calzaioli on the left as you go from the Duomo), and you will find a quaint narrow street, running parallel to Via Calzaioli. Here were situated the houses of the Cerchi family who had such influence in the end of the 13th century. Some parts of the houses still standing, date from the time of which we write; you may especially notice a corner house of the Via dei Cimatori, where there is a pillar with the Cerchi arms, the three circles, on it. This once formed part of the Loggia of the Cerchi. The Donati, their enemies, had their houses in the Borgo degli Albizi, at the other end of the Corso.

I.

THE GREAT FEUD OF THE CERCHI
AND DONATI

"Go now," he cried, "Lo! he, whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg'd at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes, that leaveth him
A corse most vilely shatter'd."

(Forese Donati foretelling his brother Corso's death.)
Purg., Canto XXIV, v. 82-88.

Buondelmonte was but the small end of the wedge in the great feud which was destined to split Florence in two. The rift was widened by Corso Donati; probably a grandson of the older Corso, Buondelmonte's father-in-law.

This time the impetus of the stroke came from without the city. There had been great fightings in Pistoja where the numerous house of Cancellieri had divided against itself; and the White Cancellieri fought the Black Cancellieri ¹ on all possible occasions. The beginning of the great quarrel was one of those events which display the savage side of feudal life. One day

¹ The grandfather of the family had been twice married, the first wife's name being Bianca, and the second Nerina. They each had large families, and as they grew up, and founded other households, the members of them were apt to disagree, as is often the case in half-relationships.

young Lore, son of Guglielmo Cancellieri, was playing with his cousin Geri, son of Bertaccio, when they had a dispute and fought each other, Lore slightly wounding Geri. His father Guglielmo, being a peace-loving man, was much disturbed, and sent Lore straightway to ask pardon of his uncle Bertaccio.

The boy went, but half-uncle Bertaccio was not so easily appeased. Calling one of his men, he bade him hold Lore's hand on a chopping board, and chopped it off, saying: "Tell your father that words are not enough to heal wounds made by steel."

His overtures of peace being thus scorned, Guglielmo took up the gage of war. A fierce strife ensued, which not only split the Cancellieri family in two, but involved the whole city in a war of faction. So much bloodshed took place that the Pistoiese people had to appeal to Florence for help. The Commune straightway sent its militia to Pistoja, and put down the feud, by bringing the belligerents away with them to Florence, lodging the *Bianchi*, as prisoners on parole, in the houses of the Cerchi family, and the *Neri* in those of the Frescobaldi. This proved a fatal mistake; they were throwing a firebrand in their midst to kindle the entire city. The Cerchi were head of the Ghibelline party, while the Frescobaldi were fierce adherents of Corso Donati the Guelph, who was already a mortal enemy of Vieri Cerchi. Each party took sides with their belligerent guests, the Ghibellines became *Bianchi*, and the Guelphs *Neri*. With the former were the Cerchi, Adimari, Mozzi, Scali, Malespini, Bardi, Rossi, Cavalcanti, etc. The *Neri* were supported by the Donati, Pazzi, Vis-

domini, Buondelmonti, Spini, Tornaquinci, Tosinghi and many others.

So unquiet did the town become that the Pope was appealed to, who sending for Vieri de' Cerchi exhorted him to make peace. Vieri sullenly responded that "making peace presupposed a state of war, and that he was at war with no one." However before he returned to Florence he made an act of submission, to the will of the Pontiff. Notwithstanding that, no overtures of reconciliation were made to Corso Donati.

Before proceeding further it will be well to give a sketch of the persons and characters of these two men, whose private enmities were to spread like the Upas tree, and destroy peace for centuries. They might be described respectively as the spirit of aggression, and the spirit of resistance.

Corso the Guelph is described even by his bitter enemy Dino Compagni as a "cavalier of great soul and high renown, of gentle birth, his person beautiful and finely formed, even into old age. He possessed a fine figure and delicate features, and was a pleasing and wise orator, always intent on grand aims, familiar with great lords and worthy men, and famous throughout Italy." Dino however counteracts all this praise by adding: "He was the enemy of the *popolani*, consorted with turbulent people, and was full of craft, as cunning as he was astute." That Dino does not entirely err in this estimation, we gather from the nickname which Corso had gained for his race: that of *Male-fammi* (the do me evil).

Vieri Cerchi, head of the Ghibelline party, was outwardly a silent and peaceable man, of a tall and

fine presence. He rarely offended his neighbours, was slow of speech, and so lacking in brilliance that Corso's scornful appellations of "donkey" and "wooden post," were not without point. His chief characteristic was a solid obstinacy. He never made an attack, and was fond of calling himself a man of peace, but he would oppose to persons and schemes which did not please him a solid immovable resistance that was more deadly than all Donati's blustering aggressiveness. That he possessed both power and talent is shewn by his position as leader of the Ghibellines. The Cerchi family was large and important; their palaces were in and about the Via dei Cerchi, while those of the Donati were not far off, being in what is now the Borgo degli Albizi.

Corso Donati, before becoming a tyrant in the city, had practised tyranny in his own house. The next story will show his autocratic disposal of his sister's destinies, and as a husband he was probably not less imperious. The "Chronicle of Ferreto of Vicenza" tells us that his wife, who was sister of Vieri de' Cerchi,¹ went to Treviso with him the year he officiated in that city as Captain of the Guard to the Podestà, Gerardo da Camino. During that time she died in a mysterious manner strongly suggestive of poisoning, and the chronicler does not hesitate to say that Corso was culpable.

The Cerchi evidently suspected him, although on Corso's return to Florence at the expiration of his

¹ This is not the first marriage recorded between the families. Another Corso Donati had, fifty years before, married the daughter of a Cerchi, also named Ulivieri or Vieri. She was a sister of the blessed Umiliana de' Cerchi of whom we speak in the next story.

year of office, his brother-in law came to take supper with him. As the *scalco* (butler and carver), according to custom, tasted the wine before placing it on the table, Vieri muttered to Corso: "You did not take that precaution when you gave my sister her wine." From this moment a mortal hatred arose between the two men. It may at first have been mere suspicion on Vieri's side, and resentment on that of Corso, if the accusation were false. But it smouldered for some time, and then burst into flames.

This crisis came on May-day in the year 1300. Now May-day was one of the prettiest festivals of the year. Just as the Roman maidens, centuries before, decked themselves with flowers, and sang "*Carmina*" in praise of *Maia*, so now the Florentine damsels were festive in the month of flowers. They went into the fields in companies, gay in their *gala* dresses; they made themselves garlands of flowers, and sang Spring songs, melodious and gay. The city youths, in companies, followed them out, and they too sang *Maggiolate*, or May songs; but theirs were in praise of Love, and many a cheek blushed, and eyes sparkled among the flower-decked maidens, who knew their especial swains were in the chorus. The flower-fête was over ere the sun reached the zenith, and now in the evening the priestesses of May were dancing to the sound of the flute and the lute on Piazza Santa Trinità.

It must have been a pretty sight; the young girls in their flowing *zimarre*, the embroidered skirts of which opened over gay-hued petticoats, and whose square-cut bodices shewed white necks adorned around

with rows of pearls. Their flowing locks or long plaits were confined by garlands of golden flowers, or by real blossoms. Their cavaliers were clad in party-coloured trunk-hose and doublet, with jewelled dagger hilts flashing at their belts.

Around the dancing space, was a motley crowd of burgher fathers in the red or black *lucco*, dignified and portly; burgher mothers in brocaded robes and ample veils; artisans' wives in green camlet and white wimple; and artisans in green baize or leather jerkins, with little caps perched aside on their curled and hanging locks.

Gaily played the lutes and the flutes, and merrily danced the May-day maidens, when a clatter of horsemen was heard across the bridge. A party of Cerchi partizans reined in on the edge of the crowd to watch the dancing, but they had not long been there, when sixty cavaliers dashed down by the Porta Rossa from the Donati houses, and charged full upon the group of Cerchi. The dance ended in sudden confusion, the flower-decked maidens flew to their parents, and were forthwith hurried away from beneath the hoofs of prancing horses. Ricoverino de' Cerchi had his nose cut off by Piero Spini, an indignity which it may well be believed took a great deal of bloodshed to wash away.

The next great disturbance took place on a still more incongruous occasion, that of a lady's funeral, for these turbulent troublers of the peace respected nothing. It was the custom of the time to hold both wedding and funeral ceremonies in the open air, and to seat the more important guests, such as knights

and official dignitaries, on raised seats round the piazza, the lower class being seated on mats placed on the ground. Now at this grand funeral the Frescobaldi had invited both Cerchi and Donati, and the piazza was full. One of the Cerchi partizans got up from his mat, probably to arrange himself more comfortably, and the Donati who were seated opposite, suspecting some ruse, rose in a body to be on guard. On this the Cerchi took offence, and the solemn funeral rites were desecrated by a fierce brawl. Among the Ghibellines were both Dante Alighieri, and his friend Guido Cavalcanti the poet. Dino Compagni describes the latter as a "gentle youth, courteous and brave, but proud, and of solitary studious habits; he was also a bitter enemy to Messer Corso Donati, whom he lost no opportunity of affronting."

Messer Corso, fearing Guido, had once made an attempt to get him assassinated as he was on a pilgrimage to St. Jacopo, but it fell through. On Guido's return to Florence, he incited all his friends to assist him in revenging the injury. One day as Guido with some of the Cerchi were out on horseback with their bows in hand, they met Messer Corso, and spurring his horse forward Guido launched an arrow at him, but it fell short. Now Messer Corso's son Simone, a bold youth, was with his father as well as Cecchino dei Bardi, and some other swordsmen, and they chased the Cerchi party, throwing stones at them, one of which wounded Guido in the hand. This Simone, whom Villani¹ describes as the most worthy and virtuous youth in Florence, soon after lost his life in a

¹ Lib. VIII, cap. 48.

brawl with Niccolò son of Vieri Cerchi. Niccolò was killed in the fight. Simone died of his wounds a few hours after.

These social amenities increased to fury Corso's strong enmity to the head of the opposite party; and the feeling was strengthened by domestic, personal and political divergencies.

When he could not arouse Vieri to active quarrelling he would become contemptuous and call him ill names, such as "cavicchia" or wooden post, or would ask "has the donkey at the gate been braying to-day?"¹ The public jesters soon caught up these terms of opprobrium, and one minstrel named Scampolino improvised songs on Messer Corso's witticisms at Vieri's expense. The latter, half mad with rage but not daring to shew public resentment, threatened to call in the Pisans and men of Arezzo to put down the insolence of his persecutor. Then were the Donati alarmed in their turn, and sent to inform the Pope² that the Cerchi were in league with all the Ghibellines of Tuscany, and that the safety of Florence was in peril.

The Pope sent Cardinal Fra Matteo d'Acquasparta to make peace. He, being a churchman, ought of course to have been a loyal Guelph, but he came of a Ghibelline house, and had a secret sympathy for that party. However he began fairly enough; finding

¹ "Ha ragghiato oggi l'asino di Porta?" DINO COMPAGNI, lib. I.

² The Pope was Boniface VIII, and the envoy in this case was Neri Cambi, a very intelligent and capable man, ancestor of the writer of the MS. Chronicle so often quoted here. When in Rome, he obtained the interest of the Pope's bankers, the Spini, who assisted his negotiations.

the *grandi* were enjoying all the principal offices in the city, he proposed to the Signoria that a new and less partial election should be made. Dante Alighieri was one of the Priors on that occasion, and the majority in Council being *grandi*, the Cardinal's motion was of course rejected. The exile of the leading bel-ligerents on both sides was also proposed; but it was not then carried out. The Cardinal, finding all his efforts frustrated, left the Council in dudgeon.

Future events proved that he held private council with the Ghibellines, and Dante had good cause for writing in a letter which Leonardo Bruni says he had read: "All my ills and mishaps began in those unlucky councils when I was Prior; a Priorship, of which though I might not have been worthy from want of prudence, I was certainly not unworthy in point of faithfulness. Nor was I too young, for ten years had passed since I fought at Campaldino, no novice in arms even then, for, though at first full of fears, I found great enjoyment in the varied events of that battle."

In that year, 1301, on the vigil of St. John Baptist, when the Signoria and Art Guilds went to make their customary offerings of wax candles to their Patron Saint at the Baptistery, the Guelph burghers and the Ghibelline Priors began their usual amenities.

"It was through us that the victory of Campaldino was won," cried the burghers, to their rulers in red gowns, "and you have taken away from us all the offices of the city."

"The Signoria, much put out, took council with some of the citizens," writes Dino Compagni, "and



4108 FIRENZE TORRE DEGL' ALBERTI

GIANNINI - FIRENZE

I — Dino — was one of the number.” Dante also was among the insulted Priors, who immediately called a council, and that impartial measure, of exiling the leaders of both parties which had before been proposed, was now reconsidered and acted upon.

Dante did not foresee that in voting the exile of the leading belligerents, both Cerchi and Donati, he was also voting his own future exile, for the measure worked its own way, and fanned the flames of faction to a greater heat.

On the side of the Guelphs, Corso and Sinibaldo Donati, one of the Rossi, and Messer Pazzino dei Pazzi, Geri Spini and Rossellino della Tosa, paid the penalty of forced residence at Castel della Pieve.

The exiled Ghibellines or Bianchi were Messers Gentile Torrigiano, and Carbone de' Cerchi, Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Baldinaccio, Adimari and their partizans, all sent to Sarzana.

The Cerchi, whose policy seems to have been seeming submission, went at once to their appointed place; but the Donati, who had meanwhile gathered a strong party, under oath of allegiance to them, refused to leave Florence, till the Signoria, by threats of dire punishment, compelled obedience.

“ If we had not done so,” says Dino, “ they would have taken the city by arms that very day, for the *Lucchesi*, with the Cardinal's connivance, were coming to their aid with a large army.” This was the result of those private conferences which the Cardinal had held with the Ghibellines. The Signoria, seeing the *Lucchesi* were coming upon them, sent a strong letter defying them to enter Florentine territory;

“and I found myself writing the letter,” says Dino Compagni, who was known as a good scribe. A guard was set in the villages on the frontier to keep the passes.

The Cardinal got a fright for his treachery, for as he was standing at the window of the Archbishop's palace, where he was staying, a certain man with more ardour than discretion, shot an arrow at him, which stuck into the window shutter close by his head. He thought he might be safer in less central quarters, and went across the Arno to the house of Messer Tommaso dei Mozzi for security.

The Signoria, wishing to repair the insult the Cardinal had received, offered him a present of 2000 new florins, “and I” adds Dino with pride “carried them to him in a silver cup.

‘Monsignore,’ I said, ‘do not disdain these florins if they seem few to you; for a larger sum of money than this may not be given away without a public council.’ (This seems as if the Priors were stooping to bribery.) He answered that ‘it was very kind,’ and looked much at the florins, but did not accept them.” If he had, he must have renounced the glory off that interdict which he launched at the city on his departure.

Messer Corso Donati did not, after all, keep within bounds during exile. He left Sarzana and went to Rome, on which his goods were confiscated, and his person condemned. His mission to Rome was to set a complicated machinery in motion; his influence was to incite the Spini (the Pope's bankers) and their agent Neri Cambi, to move a certain Messer Jacopo

Guatani, a relative of His Holiness, in concert with some of the Colonna princes, to obtain the Pope's assistance, and get him to send some foreign prince under his authority, to prevent the Ghibellines from ruling Florence all their own way, as they were doing.

Of course the Pope was willing enough to assist the Guelph or Church party, and promised to send Prince Charles of Valois, ostensibly to set right some ecclesiastical abuses, but in reality to turn the balance of power. The Cerchi looked on the arrival of this King Stork with some apprehension; yet as he came from the Pope, they could not refuse to submit to his authority. They took the precaution, however, of getting their arms and partizans ready in their own houses to be on the alert at his first move.

Charles of Valois entered the city on Sunday the 4th of November, 1301, and was received by the citizens with all honor, a *palio* or horse-race being got up to celebrate the occasion. Things seemed peaceable enough at first, but ere long a large body of lances arrived from Lucca, under the plea of paying homage to the Prince; and a similar band of 200 horsemen came from Perugia: next Messer Conte appeared from Gubbio with a host of Sienese knights, till with Charles' own guard of 300, there were 1200 horse under the Prince's command. And then, the hearts of the Cerchi began to fail, for they realized that the foreign Prince would very likely deprive them of liberty.

Moreover, on his arrival, Charles had refused to dismount in the piazza prepared for him, where the glorious King Charlemagne had dismounted; but

pushed on across the Arno to the Guelphic house of the Frescobaldi.

The changes he made in the government, the constant substitution of Guelphs for Ghibellines, so alarmed the Priors that they shook in their shoes. The more so when one day a holy hermit known as Brother Benedict came secretly to them, and in an awful whisper told them it had been revealed to him that the city was fated to great tribulation.

"Send word to your Bishop," he added, "to make a religious procession, and the evil shall in part be avoided, but *make sure that the procession does not cross the Arno.*"

The superstitious Priors followed the hermit's council, though some bold spirits among them laughed, and derisively said "that they had better be sharpening their swords." Besides ordering the procession, the Priors made very stringent laws against tumults or brawls in the streets. All classes felt that there was some climax expected, and everyone was on guard. Messer Manetto Scali prepared defences for his house, and got ready on the tower his engines for throwing stones. The Spini, who lived opposite, did the same for they were of adverse parties. Yet while arming against each other, they used smooth and deceitful words.

"Of course," they said, "we are all friends, and have no other intention in this, but to throw off the yoke that oppresses us both." In the same way did the Bardi throw dust in the eyes of the Mozzi, and the Buondelmonti talked fair to their inimical neighbours the Gherardini.

By degrees Prince Charles got all the *Sesto* of Oltr'Arno into his power, promising to guard it for the Signoria; but that council was not reassured of his fidelity when they found that during the night he had admitted into the city Gherarduccio Buondelmonti, one of the Guelph exiles. They doubled the guard at the gates, and took other precautions which brought Charles of Valois and his barons to the Palace of the Signoria, declaring that they were offended by this want of trust.

That very night turbulent old Corso Donati thought it opportune to return to Florence. The gates being closed and guarded, he went to a postern near Santa Maria Maggiore, between his own houses and those of the Uccellini, and sawing out a panel entered with his friends. No sooner was it known in the morning that he was there, than the Guelph partizans, who were within the city, flocked round his house, crying: "Long live Messer Corso, our Baron."

Corso knew when to seize the fateful moment, and lost no time in asserting his power, by storming the houses of the Corbizzi on Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, and thereon planting his standard. While the astounded Ghibellines were deliberating how to oppose him, he proceeded to open the prisons of the Stinche and Bargello, releasing all the political prisoners of his own party.

The Priors, in dismay, commanded that the big bell of the Palace should be rung, to call the people to arms, but the Cerchi were all barricaded into their strong houses, and not an armed man rode forth except Messer Goccio and Messer Bindo Adimari, with

their brothers; who seeing the piazza empty, returned home again.

That evening the people of Florence, whose eyes were spiritual enough to behold signs and wonders, saw a crimson cross in the sky, "which," says Dino Compagni, "remained as long as it would take a horse to run two lengths of the course, so that the people who saw it, as I clearly did, might understand that God was strongly averse to our troubled city."¹

Left masters of the situation, the *Neri* or Donati party began to burn the houses of the Cerchi, to rob and pillage, and otherwise harass them; and this continued for six days, Charles of Valois half-shutting his eyes to it. If he saw a lurid light across the river he would ask: "What fire is that?" and being answered: "Oh, it is only a shed." took no more notice, though the shed in question was in reality a fine and noble palace.

The Priors appealed to the strongest citizens for mercy on their city, but mercy was not accorded, so in despair they resigned office, and left the Palace.

Then was got up one of those governments which mark times of revolution, when the most unscrupulous men come to the surface; and the laws of that bad *Priorata* were very oppressive indeed. The Podestà cut off wholesale the heads of the Ghibelline rebels, as they called them; the judge Conte Gabbrielli of Gubbio, who was in league with Charles of Valois, brought rich citizens to the bar, and mulcted them

¹ Dante in his *Convito* bears witness to this meteor. He says: "In Florence, at the beginning of its destruction, there was seen in the air the figure of a cross, formed by a great quantity of those vapours which follow the star of Mars."

of good golden florins by thousands. Dante was one of these sufferers.

Not long after this, Prince Charles discovered, or thought he did, that some of the Ghibellines were, with a certain Piero Ferrante of Languedoc, conspiring to murder him; so he called a secret council by night to discuss the desirability of arresting these conspirators, and cutting off their heads. The votes were in a majority of ten to seven, but the seven were enough to warn the doomed men to flee. By April 1352 the *Neri* were so strong in power that they were able to exile the *Bianchi* by public decree, and Dino gives a long list of Cerchi, Scali, Lamberti, Uberti, etc., 600 men in all, including Dante Alighieri and his poet-friend Guido Cavalcanti "who went wandering hither and thither through the world, some in this part and some in that."

Dante, as we know, went to Ravenna, Guido returned from exile to die, which was perhaps as well for him, for ere long Corso, his old enemy, had put his name down on a list of rebels destined for execution.

Charles of Valois having fulfilled his mission, and placed the Guelphs in power, thus giving the Pope a stronghold in Florence, went back to Rome on April 4th, 1302, to obtain the papal benediction before proceeding to Sicily. After some more tumults, and wholesale firing of houses, the city was left to the care of Corso Donati the Baron, among whose partizans we find many names well known in present times, such as Frescobaldi, Rucellai, Peruzzi, Gherardini, Acciaiuoli, Pazzi, Buondelmonti, etc.

Corso did not like the bad *Priorata*, which had

been hastily formed of citizens not of the best class, and thought a new election of Priors, from men of his own class, would be much better.

New Priors were accordingly chosen,—a Signoria which the old Ghibelline, Dino Compagni, declared “would be the ruin of the city.” The Florentines, however, had a better chance of peace than had been theirs for a long time, and might have enjoyed it, had not that turbulent old Corso, who could never be quiet, kept them in a ferment. He was constantly agitating, and exposed many abuses, which were going on in regard to the public funds, and ended in getting up another civil war, Corso Donati and Lottieri, Bishop of Florence, leading on one side, and the Signoria on the other. The Signoria sent to Lucca for aid, and the city was again armed for a fight. The *serraglie* (barricades) were put up, and the towers became powerful engines of war, for throwing missiles on the people’s heads.

A great many wax candles were burned at the shrine of the miraculous Madonna in Or San Michele, and one unlucky evening these candles set fire to several waxen figures, votive offerings, which hung round the shrine. The blaze sent the people mad. Catching up brands from it, they fired several houses till nearly all Calimala and Por Santa Maria were in flames.

Again the Pope tried to make peace, and sent his Legate, Niccolò da Prato, who on April 26th, 1304, gathered the belligerents on Piazza S.^{ta} Maria Novella, and, by the Pontiff’s command, bade them kiss each other. How much peace there was in that kiss has been shewn in the story of Palazzo Mozzi.

Corso Donati and ten distinguished citizens were sent to Rome as hostages for peace, and remained there till the Pope's death in 1307, when Corso returned home to find the government of Florence remodelled, placed on a firmer basis, and enjoying a peace which only his presence seemed to break. By way of being neutral he had taken his second wife from a Ghibelline house, a daughter of Uguccone della Faggiuola. His friendship with her family produced a very bad impression on Guelphic Florence, and in 1308 Rosso della Tosa, Pazzino dei Pazzi and Geri Spini, with their followers, repaired armed to the Palace of the Signoria, to claim from the Captain of the People a warrant for the arrest of Messer Corso as a contumacious rebel.

Now, during all the wars bold old Corso was the only man who had walked about unarmed to shew his neutrality (this was after his enemy Vieri Cerchi was out of Florence, by the bye), but on this peril presenting itself he immediately barricaded all the Donati houses, and retired within his stronghold. Some bloodshed took place in the streets, till the assaulting party made a breach, and entered the enclosure. Corso, hating to be taken like a rat in a hole, made a sudden sally, charged through the assailants, and with his partizans, dashed out of the Porta alla Croce. Here on the banks of the Affrico, the assailants overtook them, and Gherardo was killed. Corso got as far as Rovezzano, where the soldiers of the Signoria took him prisoner. Determined not to face his triumphant accusers alive, Corso threw himself from his horse, and was killed by a blow from

a halberd by one of his captors. His corpse was taken from the high road by the monks of San Salvi, and interred without religious ceremonies.

So died belligerent Corso, who was certainly one of the most prominent men of his time. Had his spirit been less unquiet, he might have done his country as much good, as he did evil; for his aims were high, and his character, in some ways, grand.

After his death, Florence was at peace within her walls, though little peace remained without. The exiles had spread like sparks from a central fire, and wherever they alighted they caused flames of tumult and revolt. The Cancellieri took added fuel from Florence, and in Pistoja *Bianchi* and *Neri* were more virulent than ever. Lucca, Prato, Siena were all set in a ferment, and began breeding the spirit of enmity against Florence, which brought into Tuscany her next scourge: — the Condottieri and their mercenary armies.

II.

PICCARDA DONATI

We will not leave Corso Donati without referring to a more domestic incident in his life, which not only throws into relief his own fierce and overbearing nature, but also emphasizes the two opposite sides of thought in those wild times; one half of society seemed intent on a ferocious struggle for power, or resistance to oppression; the other on a fanatical

seeking for peace, and craving for a spiritual life, in which there should be no more turmoil.

Corso had a sister named Piccarda, who was as enthusiastic for peace, as he was for war. She was a lovely girl with an angelic soul, which was vexed with the unquiet life of her house, and as far as possible withdrew from it. She sighed for heaven and repose, and spent her time in celestial dreams and aspirations, till they became to her as realities. At night she had visions of choirs of angels who had been maidens like herself—and she heard their heavenly harmonies so clearly that she forgot the terrible ringing of armour, clashing of swords, and roaring of angry voices that made her days so full of terror.

One night she saw the blessed St. Clare herself, who told her she would find peace, and a heavenly spouse, by taking the veil in her convent near the Carmine Church. Not daring to broach this subject to her brother Corso, she waited till he had gone to Bologna where he was chosen as Captain of the People, in 1293, and during his absence she took the vows in the convent of St. Clare, under the name of Sister Constance.

No sooner did news of this very independent step reach Bologna, than Corso, who had promised her in marriage to one of his partizans, Rossellino della Tosa, threw up his Captaincy, and rushed home in a rage; declaring that he would take Piccarda by force from the convent, rather than that she should frustrate his plans. "Was he not head of the family? and had he not the right to dispose of his own womenkind as he pleased?" he asked.

He accordingly employed a mercenary ruffian named Farinata, who, with twelve of his band, scaled the walls of the convent at night, frightened all the innocent nuns out of their senses, and carried off Piccarda to her brother's house, regardless of her beseeching prayers for pity, or her sister-nuns' shrieks for aid.

When she entered the familiar walls which she had hoped would never hold her again, Corso, in a fury, tore off her white wimple and bands, forced her into worldly garments, and without loss of time married her to Messer Rossellino. The unfortunate girl, finding prayers for human pity were unavailing, threw herself on heavenly aid. She flew from the bridal altar to the Crucifix in the family chapel, and with fervent prayers and tears, besought that since she could in no other way preserve herself for Christ, her only spouse, a heaven-sent leprosy might be granted to keep her from human touch.

The prayer was answered: — we are told that as she knelt there, her fair skin turned deadly white, and dry and scaly, her bright eyes became lustreless, her beauty was withdrawn. Instead of his lovely bride, Messer Rossellino saw only an awful leper. Messer Corso's ire gave way to horror, all the family wept and shuddered, but the leper smiled serenely, thanking God for her release, and within a few days the soul of Piccarda left her defaced body, and flew pure and saintly to heaven.

Messer Corso's proud spirit was so subdued that he submitted to the penance imposed by the bishop, and through the public streets which he was accustomed to tread so proudly, he walked clad in the garb of a

mendicant, with only one poor garment on. But though his body was humbled his spirit was indomitable as ever; this outward humility did not ward off the evil he was doomed to bring on Florence, as we have seen by the foregoing story, which includes the eight years following this event.

Dante, who lived close by the Cerchi and Donati, and knew the whole drama, and the people who acted it, has given us a beautiful picture of Piccarda in Paradise, where she tells her story to him. His spiritual eyes beheld the beautiful girl he knew on earth, in the world of the Moon, where those spirits are placed whose vows to God have not entirely been fulfilled. Among these spirits wanders Piccarda, radiant and happy, but not yet promoted to the highest heaven because of her unfulfilled vows, though they were not broken by herself. She tells the Poet all her story, and how Corso tore off the *bende* (veil) that marked her as Christ's, and then she points out to him the spirit of a kindred soul — Constance, daughter of King Roger of Sicily, whose nephew King William had, in 1186, taken her by force from a convent, to espouse Henry V, son of Barbarossa.

The whole passage (*Paradise*, III, v. 33-128 ¹) is one of the most charming scenes in Dante, from the time he first beholds her soft radiance, to the moment when she turns away and vanishes, singing her melodious "Ave Maria"

And I unto the shade that seemed most wishful
To speak, directed me, and I began,

¹ This quotation is from Longfellow's Dante. All the others from Cary's translation.

As one whom too great eagerness bewilders;
 "O well-created spirit, who in the rays
 Of life eternal dost the sweetness taste
 Which being untasted ne'er is comprehended,
 Grateful 'twill be to me, if thou content me
 Both with your name and with your destiny."
 Whereat she promptly and with laughing eyes:
 "Our charity doth never shut the doors
 Against a just desire, except as one
 Who wills that all her court be like herself.
 I was a virgin sister in the world:
 And if thy mind doth contemplate me well,
 The being more fair will not conceal me from thee,
 But thou shalt recognize I am Piccarda,
 Who, stationed here among these other blessed,
 Myself am blessed in the lowest sphere.
 All our affections, that alone inflamed
 Are in the pleasure of the Holy Ghost,
 Rejoice at being of his order formed;
 And this allotment, which appears so low,
 Therefore is given us, because our vows
 Have been neglected and in some part void."
 Whence I to her: "In your miraculous aspects
 There shines I know not what of the divine,
 Which doth transform you from our first conceptions,
 Therefore I was not swift in my remembrance;
 But what thou tellest me now aids me so,
 That the refiguring is easier to me.
 But tell me, ye who in this place are happy,
 Are you desirous of a higher place,
 To see more, or to make yourselves more friends?"
 First, with those other shades she smiled a little;
 Thereafter answered me so full of gladness,
 She seemed to burn in the first fire of love;
 "Brother, our will is quieted by virtue
 Of charity, that makes us wish alone
 For what we have, nor gives us thirst for more."

 E'en thus did I, with gesture and with word,

To learn from her what was the web wherein
She did not ply the shuttle to the end.
“A perfect life and merit high in heaven
A lady o’er us,” said she, “by whose rule
Down in your world they vest and veil themselves,
That until death they may both watch and sleep
Beside that Spouse who every vow accepts
Which charity conformeth to his pleasure.
To follow her, in girlhood from the world
I fled, and in her habit shut myself,
And pledged me to the pathway of her sect.
Then men accustomed unto evil more
Than unto good, from the sweet cloister tore me;
God knows what afterward my life became.”

In Canto IV Beatrice answers, at length, Dante’s very natural question why Piccarda and Constance, whose vows had not been broken by their own actions, should be assigned a lower place than other pure spirits in Paradise.

Another great poet, Petrarch, has in the *Trionfo della Castità* also drawn his picture of Piccarda in Paradise.

Al fin vidi una che si chiuse e strinse
Sopr’ Arno per servarsi, e non le valse,
Chè forza altrui il suo bel pensier vinse.

Most of the great families had their saints or holy women; such were Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi and several other *Beate*. As we have seen, the Donati had their blessed Piccarda; the Cerchi were their rivals even in this; their saintly Umiliana lived in 1219, nearly a century before Piccarda. Her father Ulivieri had seventeen children, eleven of whom were sons. By a curious coincidence, one of her sisters

married also a Corso Donati, son of Fòrese, and brother of the tragic bride of Buondelmonte.

In spite of her longings for the cloister, Umiliana was married at the age of sixteen and went as usual to live with her husband's family. Here she found a sister-in-law as devout as herself, and the two spent most of their time in devotions. The husband did not approve of this constant going to church when her household required her at home; but the only notice she took of his reproofs was to have daily masses said for his soul.

She had two little girls, one of whom was named Regale; she loved them: "not as earthly mothers love, for when they were ill she prayed that God would take them out of the world," a wish which plainly shews what an undesirable world in the eyes of a peace-loving woman was a city split into factions.

When she became a widow she left her children to the care of others (here, I fear, her own want of heart and not the badness of the world was to be blamed), and in obedience to her father's command returned to his house. The recall was, of course, with a view to a second marriage, but Umiliana this time refused to obey, and not finding life in a household of blustering brothers to her taste, she constantly withdrew to her room in the tower. Here she made an oratory, and held commune with the Holy Spirit, which visited her in the form of a dove. No doubt the dove was a mere mundane pigeon, glorified only in her fanatic fancies.

Vieri grew very angry, and threatened that if she did not come down like a sensible woman, he would

wall her up in the tower she was so fond of. On this her visions increased, the devil, in the form of her sister-in-law Ravenna, tempted her, but at the hour of prayer her guardian angel released her. She lay in a swoon for three days, after which she was fed with celestial food. Of course all these fantasies of an exalted brain were enough in those superstitious times to mark her as saintly; and so after her death Umiliana became a *Beata*, which is to a Saint, in the same degree as a Deacon is to a Priest.

The Cerchi's holy woman is altogether too mediæval to be interesting in these days; she has not that veil of poesy thrown over her, which has glorified Piccarda.

So much depends on a biographer. A saint in the hands of a monkish narrator necessarily comes out much more austere and less beautiful, than one drawn by poets like Dante and Petrarch, with a background of Paradise.

XII.

STORY OF PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA.

(A. D. 1378)

The Piazza della Signoria was in the time of the Republic the very heart of the city, through which flowed all the courses of its social and political life. It was the seat of government; the place of public meetings, fêtes, and demonstrations; a nucleus of history, and a shrine of art and architecture. The Palazzo Vecchio, which used to be the abode of the Signoria while in office, still retains its mediæval form, just as impressed by Arnolfo. It has however lost the *ringhiera*, or platform, on which the newly elected Priors shewed themselves on entering office, and from which all decrees were made known to the citizens. The *ringhiera* is now replaced by a wide flight of steps, on which the David of Michelangelo once stood. The old Marzocco or crouching lion, the ancient ensign of the Republic, still retains its place there. The Loggia de' Lanzi, where the military guards of the Signoria and Grand Dukes used to stand, is now turned into a shrine of Art, containing many a master-piece of Florentine and ancient sculpture. In the 13th century the Piazza was much smaller than at present. Where the archway connecting the palace with the Uffizi now spans the way, was once the Basilica of San Pier Scheraggio, a building closely connected with the story of those early days. It was destroyed when the Uffizi galleries were built.



4135 FIRENZE - LOGGIATO DEGLI UFFIZI E PALAZZO VECCHIO

EGIDIO GIANNINI - FIRENZE

THE GREAT STRIKE

During all the 14th century peace never long visited the Florentines. If they had no enemies without, the most powerful citizens made tumults within the walls. Thus no sooner was the invader Castruccio Castracane of Lucca removed by death in 1328 from harassing them, than the two rich families Bardi and Frescobaldi, whose houses commanded nearly all the south bank of the Arno, set themselves up to get power into their hands, and oppress their neighbours.

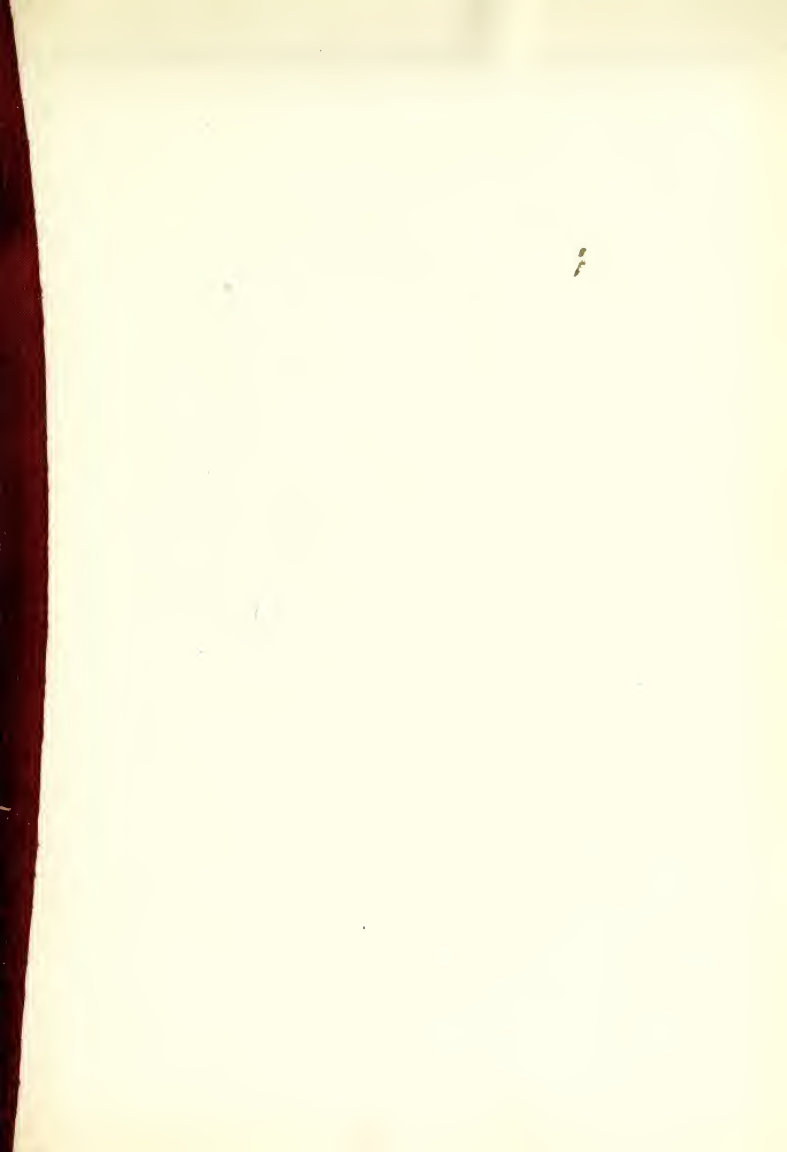
Being opposed, they barricaded all the bridges, made fortresses of their houses, and fought any body who dared to gainsay them. To free themselves from these arrogant *grandi*, the *popolani* (tradesmen and burghers) appealed to Charles, Duke of Calabria, who sent Walter de Brienne, Duke of Athens, as his Envoy to set affairs in order. Alas! he proved a greater tyrant than the *grandi* whom he came to suppress. He forthwith turned out the Gonfaloniere and Priors, upset the whole scheme of government, and usurped arbitrary power. So great was his tyranny that for once rich and poor, nobles and people, combined against it, and determined to regain liberty at all cost. They held secret meetings, binding themselves by oath to expel the Duke, and on July 26th, 1343, it was planned to raise a tumult, and storm the palace. He tried to come to terms, but all his efforts at pacification failed, and on August 6th he was driven out amidst the execrations of all Florence.

Then came another struggle for power, the *grandi* were again overbearing, and the plebeians restive. This time it was the Albizi and the Ricci, who by their enmities and tyranny caused the tumult of 1357, till new laws were made to deprive the nobles of power to hold civic offices. When to this was added the fall of the Albizi, and the failure of the Bardi family, because Edward III of England did not pay his debts, we are not surprised that by 1378 the all-powerful masses had things all their own way. Especially after those two eventful months when Salvestro dei Medici was Gonfaloniere; and he — the ancestor of a family of tyrants — openly took the part of the people in overthrowing the *grandi*, whereby a tremendous tumult was made, shops being shut and houses barricaded. This happened in May; the affair smouldered till Saint John's day, when the Consuls of the Arts were expected to do homage to the Signoria on the Piazza.¹

They came, but not in humility. Brandishing their standards they shouted: *Viva il Popolo e la Libertà*.

While the Priors deliberated what steps to take, the crowd, being highly excited, went off with their flags, and began setting fire to the houses of the nobles. Those of the Strozzi, Pier degli Albizi, the Caviccioli, and Guadagni, the Pazzi, Buondelmonti, Soderini, and Serragli, were the principal objects of their revenge. Some ill disposed people even stormed the convent of Santo Spirito, and would have done more harm still, had not one of the Priors, Pier di Fronte, a wool merchant, reduced them to reason.

¹ See Story VIII, "The Court of Love etc."





THE ARTIST'S DESIGN BY J. H. B. 1840

By way of a warning, four of the ringleaders were hung on gallows, one in each quarter of the city; but the Signoria were so much alarmed that when the new Priors entered office on July 1st with Luigi Guicciardini as Gonfaloniere of Justice, they omitted the usual ceremonies of bell ringing, and speech-making from the *ringhiera*. Moreover they kept themselves close shut in the palace with an armed guard at the gate; whereas the outgoing Gonfaloniere Salvestro de' Medici, champion of the people, was escorted to his house with all honours, and crowds of people followed to shew their respect to him.

There were wheels within wheels in the politics of that time. The nobles being removed, the trade guilds became jealous of each other, and all were jealous of the guild of Wool, which for two hundred years had been the leading influence. The guild had set its seal — the Lamb holding a gonfalon — on many a grand building, which Florence owed to its enterprise and patriotism. The wool merchants were certainly, great benefactors to their city, but they had undoubtedly “waxen great.”

So many of the minor arts connected with the wool trade had fallen under their jurisdiction, that the *Arte della Lana* may have been said to carry three fourths of the city in its pocket.

The minor arts protested that they were not fairly representend in the government, and while this question was pending, the *ciompi*¹ rose up and shouted

¹ Artisans had got the generic name of *ciompi* from the Duke of Athens, who had come up from Naples, where every artisan called his neighbour *compare* (godfather), a word the Duke's French pronunciation softened into *ciompi*.

forth their grievances. The Duke of Athens had unwisely given this great class certain privileges, and allowed them consuls of their own, which favour they lost again on his expulsion. But they were not so easily put down, and had already found out the power of union, for even in 1345 they had made a strike for higher wages. Strikes, it seems, are not a monopoly of this 19th century.

With these sentiments it is not remarkable if the *ciompi*, finding a tumultuous state of affairs on that midsummer day, thought it a good opportunity to obtain also their "rights" as they called them. They held mass-meetings and demonstrations, in which their orators shouted a great deal of seditious protest, and at a meeting held outside Porta San Gallo they elected their captain and officers, and swore to hold together for mutual defence.

News of this meeting came to the ears of the Signoria, who on July 19th, 1378, sent to arrest one of its promoters. He was a certain Simoncino, who lived by the gate of San Pier Gattolino (Porta Romana). The Priors tried to make Simoncino confess all the schemes of the *ciompi*, but his information not being complete enough to please them, he was handed over to the Captain, who put him to the torture. This elicited that there was a revolution impending, and that Salvestro de' Medici was at the head of it.

Now it chanced that the clock of the Palazzo Vecchio having gone wrong, a worthy clockmaker named Niccola degli Oriuoli was in the palace mending it. Hearing poor Simoncino's cries, he ran off to his

house in San Frediano, crying: *Levati, i Signori fanno carne*, which might be freely translated "Up and be doing, the Signoria are committing butchery."

And the *ciompi* lost no time. Some of them went up the belfry of the Carmine, and rang the bells *a stormo*. Soon all the bells in Florence (except the "Vacca" at the Palazzo Vecchio) were ringing madly, and people rushing from houses, factories, and shops, were arming themselves with the nearest weapons they could find. All made for the same place, — the Piazza della Signoria. First came the men of San Pier Maggiore who lived nearest, next those of Vacchereccia who were chiefly silk merchants' workmen.

The Guard of the Signoria stood armed in their usual place the Loggia dei Lanzi, but they took not a step against the populace. The Priors had called on the Gonfalonieri of the quarters to come to their aid with their militia, but not an ensign appeared, excepting only the Golden Lion and the Vair, under Giovenco della Stufa, and Giovanni Cambi. Seeing that none of the others arrived, they soon went away, leaving the multitude unbridled, and shouting under the palace windows: "Give us Simoncino and the other prisoners you have."

One of the Priors, more wrath than wise, said: "Aye, we will render them up, but they shall be cut to pieces first."

The Gonfaloniere however deemed it better to give them both life and liberty.

It chanced that Salvestro de' Medici was in the palace at the time, having been summoned the evening before to answer the accusation of complicity in

the plot, and he was sent with a deputy from the Signoria to ask the rioters what they demanded.

But the *ciompi* were in no mood for parley or reason. They had just successfully stormed the palace of the Podestà, and got possession of his standard, which they brandished wildly; and thinking that while they held that ensign, the law was in their hands, they committed the greatest atrocities. They set fire to the house of the Gonfaloniere, the Guicciardini and others of his friends, but with a queer notion of honour they decreed that no robbery was to be committed. However, to the end that their enemies should not profit by this honesty, it was ordered that all valuables of every kind should be thrown into the fire. Stefani, an eye witness, said this abstention from plunder was carried so far, that he saw a man thrust a lance into the shoulder of a comrade, who wanted a piece of salt pork for himself, instead of throwing it into the fire.

Then a new whim seized these usurpers of the insignia of the Podestà. If they had power to punish, they considered that they had power also to reward, and forthwith created Salvestro de' Medici and several other influential partizans *cavalieri*. Sixty new knights were made in all, including a wool comber, and a baker.

So hap-hazard was the choice, that they sometimes were undecided whether to burn a man's house, or to dub him a knight. It was the most curious equestrian order possible, but as great feasts and gaiety accompanied the creation of these cavaliers of the mob, the government let it pass, hoping it might serve to keep the rioters quiet.

But no, they soon came to business again. Towards evening some thousands were collected in Piazza Santa Barbara, and they sent word that the Captains of the Companies with their soldiers should come and take a message from them to the Signoria. But the Captains had no men to bring; they were all in the tumult, and the leaders were afraid to appear alone.

Next morning a tremendous fall of rain dispersed the revolutionists for an hour or two, but only to nurse their wrath to greater heat. As soon as it cleared, they set up gallows on the Piazza della Signoria; and right in front of the windows of the unlucky Priors, who were shut up in the palace, they hung Ser Nuti the Bargello or criminal judge. They then went off and burned the books of the *Arte della Lana*, for the *ciompi* had a special spite against the powerful guild which they deemed held them in thrall. After which they sent an embassy into the palace.

These were, in short, the demands they made:

That all the Arts now subjugated to the *Arte della Lana*, such as combers, carders, dyers, pressers, tailors, hatmakers, etc., should have guilds and consuls of their own, and send members to the civic councils.

That the taxes should be lessened, the interest on their money increased, the laws for debtors lightened, exiles recalled, some of the *ammuniti* (those deprived of official rights) restored.

Then descending into particulars, they claimed immunity for all excesses, arsons, etc. committed since June 18th (i. e. during the present riots); demanded that some of their new cavaliers should be enriched, and Salvestro de' Medici be endowed with

the rents of the Ponte Vecchio as a reward for his assistance.

The Signoria and all the Colleagues were called into council to deliberate, but so many knotty points could not be decided in one meeting, and the populace had to wait till next day for a decisive answer, employing the night in a few more firebrand amenities.

Next morning, the 22nd of July, the council being over, the Gonfaloniere came to the *ringhiera* to announce that though they could not concede all the demands, their terms for the most part would be accepted.

There was such a noise in the Piazza that not a word could be heard, and the excited crowd exclaiming, "let us go in, and turn out the Signoria," made a rush at the doors.

One of the Priors, named Guerriante Marignolle, pretending more courage than he felt, said he would go down to the doors, and assist in keeping the people out, but as soon as he got there he slid away and hastened home. The rioters seeing this, called out: "Come down all of you, we want no more Signoria."

Tommaso Strozzi went into the council room and told the colleagues that Guerriante had absconded.

Messer Acciaiuoli and Niccolò Canacci were for holding out, and said "the others might do as they liked, but they two should not move."

Most of them however were greatly disturbed: "some wept, some wrung their hands, and others hid their faces,¹" while the populace shouted madly: "Come down, or we will fire and sack the city."

¹ GINO CAPPONI, *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, lib. IV, cap. I, p. 347.

Tommaso Strozzi and Benedetto Alberti courageously went down to offer terms to the people, but to no purpose; the people were mad with excitement, and the helpless Priors had to desert their council room and fly.

All their servants and suite had already escaped to the Chamber of the "Otto," so the palace was unguarded. The poor Gonfaloniere half dead with fright was dragged out by Tommaso Strozzi, who took him safely home.

Then the populace burst into the palace.

They rushed, a mighty human wave, up the broad stairs with brawny Michele di Lando at their head, waving the gonfalon. This Michele was the son of a poor woman who kept a little shop for the selling of cabbages and *pentole* (earthen pots); he was employed as a woolcomber in the factory of those Albizi who had seceded from the *grandi*, and called themselves Alessandri.

Little thought he, as, with his slipshod working sandals hanging on his bare feet, he led his comrades with shouts and cries up the stairs, that those few steps were leading him to the highest social elevation in Florence. But so it was. As he reached the topmost stair he turned and faced the crowd, saying half jestingly: "Well! here you are, what are you going to do?"

"Make you Gonfaloniere of Justice," retorted one thoughtlessly. The mad crowd took up the idea, and with deafening shouts, Michele di Lando, by this unique council of the people, was elected Gonfaloniere.

There must have been something noble in the cha-

racter of the man, for no sooner was he placed on this dizzy height of power than he resolved to use it to the best of his ability.

A great dignity immediately marked his actions, he felt himself almost an Emperor, for there being no Priors, nor councils, he was for that day supreme ruler of the city. Passing with a masterful step into the council chamber, he wrote several letters and decrees, calling the public Parliament to meet next day, for the purpose of choosing civil officers, and electing Priors and colleagues.

All this was done in due order. In the first council he proposed to form three new trade guilds, with consuls and privileges like the other *arti*. The first of these included tailors, bodice makers and barbers; the second, wool-combers and dyers; the third, the general mass of *ciompi* or *popolo minuto*, those workmen of all kinds, who had hitherto been merged in other arts without rights of their own.

This he did in all good faith, hoping to satisfy and quiet the populace, but in the end, it did great harm, for the workpeople being now placed on a level with their masters, clamoured for equal rights. They insisted on the three new guilds having an equal number of Priors in council; and as they represented by far the greatest part of the population, it was literally placing the city in the power of the masses.

These free citizens, who had votes, and were represented in the councils, now refused to work unless just when they chose. Factories had to be shut, shops closed, and the poor ran a chance of dying of

famine. Then the *ciompi* wanted a decree made that every one who needed it was to have a *staio* of corn given him; they demanded a division of all the public money: they exiled the Priors whom they had turned out of office; and in fact upset all order, proving themselves the most insolent of tyrants.

One of their great amusements was to unmake all the Knights they had previously created, by cutting off their spurs. Then they created a new order from the lowest of the labouring population. They styled themselves God's People (*Popolo di Dio*). They liberated prisoners, and compelling them to kiss the *ciompi* ensign — a lamb — bade them "thank God who has liberated you."

Michele di Lando soon found out that in giving the working classes so much power, he had done great injury to the state; and set himself earnestly to bring the *ciompi* to reason. He had however let them go too far, and could not again bridle them.

When he refused some of their insolent demands until a larger council could be called to consider the matter, they decided that they would not wait for his councils but form a government of their own.

Marching to the convent of Santa Maria Novella, they by mere force of numbers compelled the monks to give up their large chapel as a council chamber. They elected eight Priors, who were called the *Otto di Balìa di Santa Maria Novella*, and chose also sixteen colleagues from the new guilds. With this organization they began making decrees, which if carried out, would have annulled all those of the true government.

Next they asserted that the "Eight of Santa Maria Novella" ought to assist at the deliberations in Palazzo Vecchio. Hoping to keep them quiet, this was allowed, but as they clamorously vetoed everything that was proposed, the council chamber became a pandemonium.

At length on the last evening of Michele di Lando's stormy rule, when two of the "Eight" came to the palace, insolently demanding that the new Priors, who were to enter office on the morrow, should take their oaths before the "Eight of Santa Maria Novella," Michele entirely lost his patience, and determined to make an end of the *ciompi* insolence.

Remembering that he should only be gonfaloniere for one night more, he knew the punishment must be prompt. Unsheathing the sword he wore, he thrust at the two envoys, who retreated before him to the top of the stairs. One was cut on the head, and fell down backwards, on a priest who was coming up, and broke his neck. The rumour of this double tragedy soon spread in the Piazza; Michele di Lando set the great bell of the palace ringing, to call out the militia of the companies, and the bells of each parish sounded in their turn to call the people to arms.

The *ciompi* gathered in crowds at Santa Maria Novella, hastily arming themselves as best they might. They knew that not only the government, but all the other arts were against them, for rumours had gone about the city that the *ciompi* had made a plot, to first plunder and sack the city, and then to sell it to the Marquis of Ferrara.

Having begun his repression of the *ciompi*, Mi-

chele di Lando carried it through with spirit. Deeming it more glorious to fight openly, than to wait his adversaries within the strong walls of the palace, he armed himself, and taking his gonfalon, rode with two colleagues through the streets crying: "Long live the trade guilds and the people; death to traitors who would bring foreign Lords to rule the city."

The *popolani*, as distinguished from the *popolo minuto* (*ciompi*), flocked in great numbers to his standard, and he led the way to Santa Maria Novella, to give battle to the *ciompi* on their own ground. He found the place deserted however, for the whole mass of workmen had gone by another street to besiege him in the Palazzo Vecchio,—nothing less!

Michele di Lando returned with his troops to the palace, where he forced a passage through the besieging multitude, and entered. Soon after he sent out a command that the standards of all the companies must be consigned to the Priors. All were immediately brought and placed with due honour at the windows, excepting only the ensign of the Lamb, which the *ciompi* refused to give up. The troops of the Signoria tried to take it by force, but the rioters were brawny fellows, and fought bravely on the *ringhiera*, till driven off by stones thrown down on their heads from the battlements of the old palace.

Then they retreated by Via dei Magalotti, where another company of guards met them, and after a furious fight finally dispersed them.

The trade guilds, who had given in their allegiance, went secure about the city, but the stubborn *ciompi*

had to hide in their houses, or escape into the country, being for the time utterly put down. The next morning, the new Priors entered office under the safe escort of the sixteen companies, but the usual speech-making from the *ringhiera* was again omitted.

Michele di Lando also refused to go on the *ringhiera*, but rendered up his gonfalon in the great council chamber, and then he and his colleagues returned privately to their houses. His services in suppressing the riots, were so much appreciated by the government, that they honoured him with the gift of a fine horse, together with the shield and pennon of knighthood; and, as it was not decorous that he, an ex-gonfaloniere, should return to his mother's little greengrocer's shop, he was made Podestà of Barberino.

The *popolani* did not approve of two members of the new Signoria, who were the lowest of the *ciompi*, so they were expelled, and Giorgio Scali and another respectable citizen elected in their stead.

This council promptly suppressed the new guild of *popolo minuto*, and so regulated affairs that the greater and lesser *Arti* had an equal share in the government, and thus ended the great strike of the Florentine workmen.

XIII.

THE STORY OF VIA DELLA MORTE.

(A. D. 1400)

The "Street of Death" is a short and narrow alley close to the church of the Misericordia, and it took its name from an eerie kind of event which happened in the year of the plague, A. D. 1400. This visitation is known as the "moria de' Bianchi," because of the incessant pilgrimages of the White penitents, which overran Italy at the time.

GINEVRA DEGLI AMIERI.

The year 1400 was indeed a melancholy time for Florence. There had been internal wars and disturbances for many a lustre, the *grandi* and *popoli* had exiled each other in due rotation, and now external enemies began to threaten them. The Visconti had overrun North Italy, and that terrible Bernabò, having bought Pisa from the Lords of Appiani for 20,000 gold florins, loomed very large and near in the apprehension of the sturdy burghers, especially as their champion Sir John Hawkwood had lately died.

They prepared for the scourge of war, but a worse scourge was upon them. The plague broke out — that

too, like Bernabò, came down from the North. He might have slain his hundreds, but this slew its thousands, aye, even up to thirty thousand.

The Florentines gave themselves up to prayer and terror. The black-robed Brethren of the Misericordia were called frequently by the booming of their mournful bell, to carry patients to the *lazzaretti*, or blackening corpses to swift burial. Many great palaces were shut up, with their inmates as prisoners at their own hearths within, while the warning word SANITAS printed across the door, kept all human intercourse from them.

People crept about with fear written on their honest features, and tears of mourning dimmed many eyes. Widows and childless mothers knelt in the churches, praying to Mother Mary for consolation; and motherless children wailed in their empty homes, each weeping for some of that army of thirty thousand souls, whose fight was over. And through the streets was heard the chant of the White penitents, as they streamed by, in long files with shrouded faces, following the blood-red cross, and chanting monotonously :

Misericordia, Eterno Iddio;
Pace, pace, o Signor pio,
Non guardate al nostro error.

The MS. chronicle of Neri Cambi makes the following mention of the plague of the White-robed ones: "In the time of Matteo di Jacopo Arrighi, *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*, for the quarter of San Giovanni, in the year 1399, began the plague of the *Bianchi* (White ones), so-called because there came from Pied-

mont and Lombardy crowds of men, women, and children, both male and female; they were dressed like penitents in white sackcloth, marked with a red cross. They walked in Florence with bare feet, chanting of the mercy of God, and the holy Mother. They eat no meat, nor slept in any bed. So they of the north came to Florence, and the Florentines doing likewise, went to Arezzo, and the pilgrims from Arezzo came to Florence, and such penitence was made that the plague ceased. ¹”

Gino Capponi says ² that 40,000 Florentines joined in this religious mania, and the Signoria sent a Bishop and several official persons with them, to keep order. The Bishop of Fiesole took another party, which gathered so many devotees as they made their pilgrimage that by the time they entered Figline, there were nearly 20,000 people in the ranks.

Among the few who had not fled from the plague-stricken city, were the beautiful Ginevra degli Amieri, and her husband, Francesco Agolanti, who lived in the Corso degli Adimari (Via Calzaioli).

Ginevra, having been an unwilling bride, was not a happy wife. Her girlish heart had long been given to young Antonio Rondinelli, who had danced with her at many a social gathering, and twined garlands for her on May-day, when youths and maidens made festa in the country, and sang their blithe and lilting *Maggiolate*. But in those days, though free to love,

¹ Besides the White Company, recourse was had to the miraculous Madonna of the Impruneta, which was brought in procession to Florence on April 1st, 1400.

² *Storia di Firenze*, vol. II, p. 405.

a girl could not choose her husband, and Antonio in vain asked for the hand of Ginevra.

Her father, Messer Bernardo degli Amieri, was one of the proudest of the *grandi*, and his family palace, near the church of Sant' Andrea, had possessed a tower of the tallest height, and a *loggia* with pillared arches; both of which architectural adornments were the exclusive rights of the nobles. His ancestors had won the golden spurs, in the glorious fight of Montaperti in 1260, and though when the *popoli* got the upper hand after that, the Amieri were exiled, Messer Foglia and his son Filippo returned to Florence in 1280. They, with the other nobles, suffered the humiliation of being excluded from the magistracy, but contented themselves by displaying their wealth, and building a grand palace. The Amieri fought against Henry VII in 1313, and some of them were made prisoners at Montecatini in 1315. Other Amieri fought Castruccio in 1325, and helped to expel the tyrant Duke of Athens, after which they were rewarded by being no longer considered as *grandi*, but *popoli*. Their old pride remained, however, and *grandi* they considered themselves to the end; old Bernardo the last of the race, being one of the most stiff-necked of them all.

Now considering that the Rondinelli had always been *popoli*, were not noble, and had more than once been leaders of the opposite party against the Amieri, Bernardo would hear not a word of Antonio's suit, and forbade him even to see his daughter again. He decreed that Francesco Agolanti, member of a family whose roll was longer than his own, and who had

always been *grandi* and Ghibelline, should be the husband of Ginevra, and the unhappy lovers had no choice but to part.

Ginevra, heavy-hearted, accepted the duty of obedience, which every father in those days thought he had a right to exact, and tearfully bade Antonio farewell. He was more restive, and swore that whether she were free or not, he had given her his heart, and should never take it back.

"If I cannot marry you, I shall never marry another," he protested; and she wept because maidens were not free to deny their hand where love went not with it.

The bride's richly embroidered *zimarra* hid a joyless heart as she entered her new home in the Corso degli Adimari. She made a faithful wife, though she grew paler and sadder all the four years during which she found there was nothing to love or admire in the man who claimed her obedience. He had been married twice before, and had, it was said, more respect for a dowry than for a wife. Ginevra brought him a rich dower, but in his wasteful hands it soon disappeared, and she derived but little benefit from it.

When the plague came, Francesco Agolanti was stricken with abject terror, but Ginevra almost wished she might die. One day she was taken with mortal sickness, and after a few hours of suffering passed into deathly stillness. The doctors could feel no pulse, her heart was still, and her face pallid and waxen. Her terrified husband declared that the ominous black spot was under her arm, and crying "the plague is

upon us," gave orders for her immediate burial in the family vault in the cemetery of Santa Reparata. In those days no time was lost in hurrying the dead out of the way, and ere the sun had set Ginevra had been laid on her bier, and taken to the tomb, which was a vault just outside the wall of the Duomo under the shadow of the Campanile. It was but hastily closed with a slab of stone, for the "company of the dead" (whose white-cowled successors may be seen in the procession of any Florentine funeral to this day) had much work in those fearful times.

Agolanti, after having, according to law, sent the bed and curtains of his dead wife's chamber to be burned, shut himself up to brood over his sorrows. Not that these partook much of the nature of grief for Ginevra. They had never harmonized, and he had known from the first that she brought him no love, so that her absence would be rather a relief than otherwise. No! his chief trouble was, that as Ginevra had left no children, he would be legally compelled to return two thirds of her dowry to her father, and he was quite sure that old Messer Bernardo would exact the uttermost farthing.

Now the dowry existed no longer. He had squandered it away in feasting with his friends; betted it away in backing horses for the *palio*; thrown it away in gold embroidered doublets; and wasted it in gems for certain gay ladies with whom his wife had nothing in common.

He began to think he should have to marry a fourth rich wife with a *dote* large enough to pay back Bernardo's claim, and leave a margin for him;

and he even settled on the lady who would suit him. Yes, she really would suit precisely, and he was decidedly relieved to think of Ginevra in her tomb, and a more lively figure at his hearth.

But if Ginevra's husband did not mourn for her, there was one heart in Florence that night who did. Antonio Rondinelli had never forgotten his first love, and was overcome with grief on hearing of her sudden death. He felt that now death had released her from Agolanti, he might without wronging her go and look on her face once more. Not to harm her by any risk of slander even after death, he decided to wait till after midnight, when the city would be still, and even the ubiquitous white penitents asleep in their cloisters or church-porches.

Before that time, however, strange things had happened. One of Ginevra's servants had noticed that she wore a ring with a rare gem, and having seen how she was laid in the empty vault on her open bier, he thought how easy it would be to lift the slab of stone and take the ring off the dead hand. As soon as the streets were quiet the man, provided with a dark lantern and a crowbar, came with an accomplice to the tomb. They had barely succeeded in moving the slab a little aside, when a clanking measured sound in the paved streets caused them to run away, only just in time to escape the patrol of the Captain of the Bargello.

The guards passed by, not noticing that the new tomb was partially open, for it lay in the shadow of the Campanile. The echoes of their clanging footsteps died in the distance as they turned up the street

of the Proconsul to their quarters, but the robbers did not yet venture to continue their nefarious deeds.

The fresh night air blew cold into the square vault where Ginevra lay, and the shock of it awoke her from her dreamless sleep, or cataleptic trance. She stirred — opened her eyes, and saw with a vague wonder that she was no longer lying beneath the canopy of her own bed. All was black darkness, except at one corner where the stars were clearly visible. She felt around her — here were no coverlets, nor curtains, but her feet were bound together, and she was clad in a loose garment, with a wreath of flowers encircling her. Their faint sickly perfume, mingled with the musty damp smell of the vault, bringing the horror of the situation upon her with a shock, suddenly awoke her heart to new life. She had died and was buried! She screamed for help, but the echoes sank away unheard; in the hours of night, Florence was as still as the desert.

Ginevra felt she must help herself if she would be saved. She sat up, and succeeded in freeing her feet of their swathing bands; she moved her limbs, felt her beating heart, and knew that she was awakening from death. Was it in a new world, or had she come back to again take up her cross in this?

Rising from her bier she ascended the six steps of the vault, and peered out at the open corner where the sky was visible.

Yes! it was this world and not another — there was the great church of Santa Reparata shining in the clear moonlight like a mountain of gems, and the shadow of the tall Campanile stretching long

and black across the graves. And there before her was the church of the brethren of Mercy, behind which lay her home — her husband's house. She shuddered; ah! it would have been better if death had shut her out for ever from that. But no; — life had been cruel, and led her back to it; she must take up life and its hard duties again. With some effort, for her limbs were weak and trembling, Ginevra pushed the stone further aside, climbed out of her tomb, and found herself alone — a solitary shadowy figure in a world of shadows.

She dragged her benumbed limbs across the Piazza, and up the dark alley — which was named after her from that day — to her home, the side windows of which looked into the Via Santa Elisabetta.¹ She knocked at the door, but her hands were feeble, and made no sound; then she called: "Francesco!" but her voice was weak, the silent house gave no sign of life. At length she gained more force, and calling loudly beneath her husband's window, he heard and opened, exclaiming: "Who goes there?"

"It is I, your wife Ginevra."

"That cannot be; she is dead and buried."

"It is I — open the door, and let me in, I am cold — cold."

"Avaunt spectre," cried Francesco, making the sign of the cross, and he drove her away, promising

¹ Manni says, Francesco Agolanti lived next to the Speziale del Cappello in Via Calzaioli, and one side of the house looked into the Piazza del Fico.

The arms of the family were, *gules*: an eagle *or*. Those of the Amieri were, *or*: a bend *azure* charged with *vair*, *argent*. The Rondinelli have "speaking arms," *or*: six swallows (*rondini*) proper; a label of three.

he would have special masses said on the morrow to save her soul. Trembling with fright, he shut the window, nor could he be induced to open it again.

"He shuts me out into the night," sighed poor Ginevra, "I will go to my father," so she crossed several dark tortuous streets, and reached the old market where the Amieri had their houses behind the church of Sant'Andrea.

Here she knocked and called: "Father, father, let me in," and her father, awaked from his dull dreams, came and looked on her, but seeing only a shadowy white form, he too thought she was a spectre of the night, and said: *Vai in pace, anima benedetta* (Go in peace, blessed spirit), promising to pray for her soul.

As his window shut remorselessly, she turned away to the next house where her uncle lived, and he too repulsed her as a wandering spirit, bidding her: *Vai con Dio* (Go with God). Despairing, and dying of cold, the poor woman bewailed her fate in coming back to such an unkind world. She dragged her aching limbs to the *loggia* of San Bartolommeo in Via Calzaioli, and sat there between the pillars, praying that death might indeed come to release her from suffering. She even thought of going back to her still open tomb to die.

A footstep was heard coming down the street; Antonio Rondinelli had been wandering restlessly about, till he thought the city quiet enough to go to Ginevra's grave. The quiet he thought to find was broken by a woman's voice sighing: "Oh! is there

no one who will have pity on me! Must I die in the cruel and empty streets! Is nothing open to me but the tomb where they shut me up? God help me!"

The footsteps stopped. Antonio's heart almost ceased to beat — he knew that voice, it was that of his first love, Ginevra, whom he mourned as dead. Glancing round, he saw the corpse-like figure in its shroud, with the moonlight illuminating the pale face as it was uplifted to heaven. The lover was not afraid of ghosts; whether alive or dead, he loved her.

"Ginevra!" he cried, and she, sighing "God has sent you to save me," rose up, sank into his arms, and forgot her griefs.

"Shall I take you home?" asked Antonio, when he had heard of her marvellous escape. She shook her head.

"My husband has shut me out — I have no home."

"Will you go to your father?"

"He too has turned me away."

"Then I will take care of you. If not life then death has made you mine."

He led her tenderly down to his own house which gave its name to the Via Rondinelli, and went to awaken his mother, and crave her aid. By her help the chilled creature was warmed and fed, and nursed back to life. Madonna Rondinelli gave up her own bed to her, and she fell asleep after having begged that Antonio would go and close the grave, for as her friends were so willing to believe her dead, she declared she would never in life return to them.

The next morning though still ill from the shock and exposure, she felt a little stronger, and was able to talk over her future prospects with Antonio and his mother. No arguments could induce her to go back to Francesco.

"Let him be free as he wishes, and let me remain dead to the world. I will hide myself in a convent, and they need never know."

Of course Antonio would not hear of this, and so potent were his arguments and sophistries, so tempting his long, faithful love, and the pleading of her own heart, that instead of becoming a nun, she agreed to marry Antonio, at once.

Manni, quoting an ancient rhyme, says that Rondinelli purchased from Agolanti all Ginevra's wardrobe and jewels, under the pretext that he had to furnish a sister with a *corredo* (trousseau). So while Ginevra's family were saying Masses in hopes of laying her unquiet spirit, she was beginning a new existence on happier lines.

Agostino Velletti's *ottava rima* tells us that one day as Ginevra was going to Mass at the Santissima Annunziata, with her new mother-in-law and her servant, she met her own mother coming out of San Michele Visdomini. The mother stopped in amaze, and said to her woman: "Look, is not that like my daughter?" then coming near, she cried: "Ginevra! is it indeed you, my child? How can this be, that the dead come to life?"

Ginevra answered not a word, but tried to walk on. The mother's words, however, raised the curiosity of the crowd at the church door, and Ginevra



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was so pressed by bewildered gazers that she could scarcely pass.

The Amieri and Agolanti could not let the matter rest here; Ginevra was cited to appear before the Ecclesiastical Court, which was held in what is now the Archbishop's Palace, and a most curious case was tried.

Antonio Rondinelli pleaded that Ginevra, having died and been buried, was therefore released from the bonds of matrimony with Francesco Agolanti, he having himself refused to own her as his wife.

Agolanti, seeing in this plea a good way to be rid of the wife whose money he had consumed, and to marry another whose money he hoped to consume, seconded the plea. The judgment of the Court must have been given in the affirmative, for documental evidence shows that Ginevra's marriage with Antonio Rondinelli was sanctioned by law, her first husband Agolanti being yet alive. The ancient rhyme reporting the sentence runs thus:

Se morte ogni cosa usa finire
 Or vai, figliuola, che sei giunta al porto.
 La ragion tua non si potrà impedire,
 Vanne col tuo Anton, datti conforto;
 E tu, Francesco, la sentenza nota,
 Tu perdi a un colpo la donna, e la dota.¹

Whether this judgment were given in good faith,

¹ Translation:

If death to all things human puts an end,
 Go then, my daughter, you have reached this bourne.
 Your plea with reason none can contradict,
 Go with your loved Antonio — be consoled
 And you, Francesco, note this sentence well —
 You lose at one fell blow both wife and dower.

or whether the law was strained because the judge had been "persuaded by gold," does not appear. The Francesco Rondinelli who refers to the incident in his *Relazioni del contagio*, page 55,¹ does not say how his ancestor and namesake obtained his cause.

Ginevra is a favorite subject of Italian drama even to the present day.

It is often acted, with Stenterello as the ring-stealing thief; and as early as 1546, when Duke Cosimo was one Monday holding Carnival festivities in the Palazzo Pitti, a Comedy was acted with the following curiously involved title: *Ginevra, morta, dal Campanile, la quale essendo morta e sotterrata, resuscitò*.

This is described by Antonio da San Gallo in MS. diary for that year: he having been one of the Duke's guests.

¹ Published by Landini in Florence, 1634.



4013 FIRENZE - CHIESA DI S. MARIA NOVELLA

EGIDIO GIANNINI - FIRENZE

XIV.

A STORY OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA.¹

(A. D. 1417)

Both this church and its adjoining convent were founded by the Dominican monks who came to Florence in 1221. The foundation stone of the church was laid on St. Luke's day 1279, by the Cardinal Latino Brancalcione, a Dominican. He was one of the peace-making Cardinals, who tried to reconcile Guelphs and Ghibellines, and was sent with 300 "Cavaliers of the Church" to confirm the peace made a few years previously by Pope Gregory X. The clergy and military of the city with the *Carroccio* went to the Porta Romana to receive him in state. The whole building is the work of the Dominicans themselves, who were good artists and architects. The only exception to the pure gothic is the façade, which was done by Leon Battista Alberti in 1448, on the commission of Giovanni Rucellai, and is in a later style.

The curious arcade of tombs, lately restored, in the Via degli Avelli, was in existence in Boccaccio's time. The convent, which was immense, had several very fine cloisters, for the most part frescoed by old Florentine artists. That gem of art, the Spanish chapel, is in the Green cloister, which Paolo Uccelli decorated with his quaint monochromes.

It is difficult to find out where the Papal Hall really was. Some say it is one of the rooms attached to the fine Pharmacy of the monks. Signor Marcotti inclines to the opinion that it now forms part of the military college.

A part of the old convent is now given up to the *Società*

¹ See MECATTI, *Storia di Firenze*, vol. I, pag. 79.

dell'Accattonaggio, a society which relieves mendicancy by finding work for beggars, and is well worth the charitable attention of English visitors to Florence.

A POPE IN FLORENCE

Pontiffs have frequently visited Florence for longer or shorter periods of time. Pope Eugene IV, for instance, was here twice. He came in March 1436, to consecrate the Duomo, which Brunelleschi had then finished, and on this occasion he presented the Golden Rose to the Signoria. On July 6th, 1439, he was again in the city, and here met Palæologus, Emperor of Constantinople at the great Council which decided the union of the Greek and Latin Churches. Pope Leo X took refuge in the little frescoed chamber in the wall, in the convent of San Marco in 1494. Both he and Clement VII being Medici, had a home here, and frequently visited their native city; but only once in the course of history was a Papal Court really held here. This was in 1419-20, when Pope Martin V and all his Cardinals held their Court in the Papal Hall of the convent of Santa Maria Novella.

The Florentines had frequently found the need of a civic guest chamber, as they were often called on to receive Pontiffs, Princes, and other dignitaries, whom it was not convenient to lodge in private houses. So the Signoria decreed that part of the immense convent of Santa Maria Novella should be set apart, decorated, and richly furnished, to form a guest-



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house worthy of an Emperor. The rooms were ready, but as yet the Florentines knew not who should inaugurate them.

The honor was reserved for Martin V. To tell how he came to live here, we must go back a little.

At that time a curious number of Pontiffs were wandering about Europe. The great schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, resulted in Clement VII¹ setting up his court at Avignon while Urban VI was at Rome. Then came no less than three Popes at a time, but Innocent VII dying in 1406, there remained only the antipopes Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, who were both cited by Baldassarre Cossa, Cardinal Legate, to appear before the council of Pisa early the following year.

By way of a counter check they each called an Ecumenic council at a prior date.

Benedict, who lived at Avignon, held his at Perpignan; but Gregory knew not where to hold his meeting, for his enemy King Ladislaus of Naples held Rome, and was making advances to the council of Pisa. At length a few Cardinals met together with him at Ciudad in Friuli, but their decrees were of little importance.

Both Gregory and Benedict were absent from the council at Pisa to which they had been summoned; and though formally deposed by it, they proved recalcitrant, and still maintained their Papal state with a few adherents each.

¹ This spurious Clement VII, has nothing to do with Giulio dei Medici, who was the better known Clement VII, in 1523. There was another Benedict XIII from 1724 to 1730.

Then the wily Cardinal Legate, ignoring them, got an incompetent friar named Peter Philargi of Candia elected as Alexander V. Within a year he had surrendered to the Cardinal Legate and then died, on which Cossa called a conclave, and caused himself to be made Pope as John XXIII. He was indeed little fitted to rule the church in a difficult time, being a mere adventurer, who after a wild youth had turned to the study of divinity for the object of church preferment; and this with such success that Boniface IX had nominated him Cardinal.

As a Pope he proved himself so inefficient that the Emperor Sigismund called the council of Constance as much to consider the validity of Cossa's election, as to try the schismatical doctrines of John Huss. The enthusiast Huss was burned, Pope John XXIII was deposed, and Cardinal Otho Colonna, a man of high birth and stern principles, who had been strenuous in advocating both measures, was unanimously elected as Martin V.

He immediately showed his power by assuming his seat at the head of the council, and even the Emperor found he had given himself and the world a master. The Pope made separate Concordats with each nation; he officiated in Pontifical robes in the Cathedral; put the ex-Pope into prison; exacted an act of obedience from the crestfallen Emperor; and then broke up the council.

Pope Martin V then announced his sacred intention of travelling slowly down to Florence, where he decided to take up his abode for a time. Here was a grand opportunity to inaugurate the state guest-rooms,

and use the new Council Hall in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella.

The Commune had deliberated that the Opera of the Duomo should give the monks of Santa Maria Novella 1500 gold florins, to adorn this habitation, and make it worthy of such a Pontiff, and thus the grand Hall and other apartments in the second large Cloister were prepared.

“In the Hall were the arms of the Commune, and underneath them the arms of the Art of Wool, as you may see to this day”, says Cambi.¹ The burghers furnished the apartment magnificently, and were proud that a Pope should be the first to use it. For a description of all the grand doings which took place when His Holiness came, we will refer to our old MS. chronicle² which gives a minute account of them.

Under the date 1418 Cambi writes: “In the time of Jacopo di Berto, da Filicaia, Gonfaloniere of Justice, in February 1418, Pope Martin V came to Florence. He had been elected, by unanimous consent of the council of Constance, on October 11th, 1417, when Pope John was deposed and imprisoned. This Pope Martin was a Roman citizen of the house of Colonna; and as soon as he became Pontiff, he left Constance and went to Lombardy with several of his Cardinals. Then he passed on through the Romagna as far as Forlì; and then to Castrocaro, a Florentine possession, where our Ambassadors with four of the most honorable citizens welcomed him into our territory.

¹ That is in 1511 when Cambi wrote.

² The Priorista of Stefano del Cambio.

“The Commune decreed 1500 gold florins for *confetti*,¹ wine, corn and other necessities, and on February 25th he rested at the Abbey of San Salvi outside the Porta alla Croce.

“The next day he went on to the outside of Porta San Gallo, where the ceremonies and honors of reception were to begin. When he dismounted at the church of San Gallo, the Captains of the Guelph party were awaiting him with a beautiful canopy, and they presented him with a fine white palfrey. And there were with the Captains many of the principal citizens, all beautifully dressed.

“The Pope, mounted on the before-mentioned white steed, and with the Captains of the Guelphic party, advanced as far as the “anteporta” of San Gallo, where he was met by the magnificent Lords of the Signoria with their Colleagues, and all the magistracy of Florence, together with the Six of Commerce, and all the Florentine nobility clad in the finest garments they possessed, which were of great magnificence. Their heads were garlanded with olive, and they carried a canopy of cloth of gold, lined with ermine, which they held above the Pope while the ceremonies were being performed.

“Then the procession was set in order.

“First came a hundred youths clad in cloth of gold, each with a waxen torch in his hand, weighing 10 lbs; then followed the Cardinals. Next under a canopy came a white mule carrying a richly adorned casket which contained the Host; then the Pope un-

¹ Sweetmeats—more especially comfits which are largely used in Italian ceremonies.

der the golden canopy carried by the Priors. The Gonfaloniere walked on his right side, and the Prevost of the Signoria on the left, holding the bridle of the white palfrey; the rest of the magnificent Lords surrounded them.

“The gate of the city was opened wide, and the portcullis taken away, a thing which had never been done before for either Pope or Emperor. Thus without noise, and with much devotion they went straight through Borgo San Lorenzo, and dismounted at the Duomo, where a dais covered with carpets was placed at the foot of the steps. Thence the Pope walked on white cloth as far as the great altar, where the required ceremonies and homage having been performed, he remounted; and passed by Via dei Balestrieri, and the houses of the Magalotti, to the Piazza Signoria. Then by Borgo Sant’Apostoli and the houses of the Spini and Tornaquinci, he came to Santa Maria Novella; always being accompanied by the above-named dignitaries.

“Behind him walked a bishop who threw around him *grossi*, *bolognini* and *quattrini* for munificence, and also to keep the crowd away. Having dismounted, His Holiness being much fatigued, went to repose himself, and his mace-bearers took charge of the two golden canopies which had accompanied the procession. To each of the Cardinals our magnificent Signoria made a present of confectionery, wine, maize, corn and game, to the value of 30 gold florins each; and nineteen new Cardinals were created by the Pope at the great Altar of Santa Maria Novella.”

So the Papal Court was instituted in Florence,

and as long as it lasted the turbulent Florentines, who were so often excommunicated, rejoiced, believing themselves now safe from interdict.

Of course His Holiness felt obliged in some way to return the courtesy of the Signoria, who had spared nothing to make his welcome hearty and gorgeous, and Easter being near, he decided to give the golden rose that year to the Commune. This ceremony is also minutely described in the crabbed writing of our chronicler Del Cambi:

“In the time of Castello da Quarata, Gonfaloniere of Justice for Santo Spirito, on Easter Sunday morning the 2nd of April, 1419, Pope Martin V, after having performed Mass, gave the golden rose to our magnificent Signoria, in remembrance of the honors paid him by the Florentine people.

“Now the said Gonfaloniere being ill, Francesco di Taddeo di Giano Gherardini, the Prevost of the Signoria, for the quarter of San Giovanni, received it in his stead; and for that reason his branch of the family was afterwards called Gherardini della Rosa. There was in Florence another family of Gherardini, who had a *loggia* in Por Santa Maria, and “went for¹” the quarter of Santa Croce, but they have nothing to do with the others.

“This Prevost, in the name of the people of Florence, received the rose from the hands of the Pope, and when he had taken, it, the Pontiff came with thirteen of his Cardinals to the Piazza, where they mounted their palfreys. The Signoria and eleven Cardinals went before, and the other two, to enhance

¹ “Went for” etc., i. e. represented that district in the Signoria.

his dignity, rode on each side of the Prevost, who carried the holy rose. Thus they passed throughout the city accompanied by all the Courtiers, Lords and Ambassadors of as many nations as were in Florence.

“Our Signoria then returned to their Palace with all the court of Cardinals and Prelates, and the afore-said rose-bush, which was a golden branch with leaves of fine gold. On it were nine roses, and a little bud on the top of the nine, which contained spices, myrrh, and balsam. It was placed with all honor in the chapel of the Signoria, which was at that time a mere altar and recess in the Audience Chamber on the left of the entry; after which they all took leave.

“The next day the magnificent Lords of the Signoria mounted on horseback, accompanied by all the knights and nobles of the city, and again perambulated the city in great triumph, the said Francesco Gherardini carrying the golden rose, so that it was a grand sight to see.”

According to Del Cambi, Pope Martin's time in Florence was at first largely spent in adorning court pageants, and receiving homage.

On April the 19th there came to Florence the Rev. Monsignore Alemanno degli Adimari, Cardinal Legate of Pisa; who claimed to have been the cause of Colonna's elevation to the Papacy. The Cardinal paid great court to the Pontiff whom he had helped to make, and was received by him with much honour. The Signoria also presented him with costly offerings.

Then in May there came four Spanish Cardinals. They had been created by the antipope Benedict;

and thought it wise to be provided with a safe conduct, when they came to pay homage to Pope Martin. "And," says Cambi, "they came in great state, and were very rich, for they had spent nothing at Constance; they were honorably received, and presents were made them to the value of 30 gold florins each."

The Pontiff's next visitors were the Pope's sister, the Lady Paola, of Piombino, with her son Jacopo and his two sisters, who presented His Holiness with a white horse, a white ass, and two ostriches. All the thirteen Cardinals, and the Florentine Court with many citizens, went out to meet them.

The same month there arrived a gay young prince, Lanzialo, son of Paolo Guinigi, Lord of Lucca, to make obeisance to the Pope. He was only fifteen years of age, but had an escort of sixty horsemen. He stayed twelve days, and was honorably lodged in the house of Tedaldo Tedaldi. He made generous gifts to the Signoria and citizens, and gave a great banquet to the Priors, and the councils of Eight, and Six, etc.

Muratori and other historians, however, show that Pope Martin had other thoughts than the receptions chronicled by our gossiping *Priorista*. From his quiet home in the convent, he exercised great influence over the political affairs of Italy. He obtained a tribute of 8000 gold florins a year from the Bolognese, as a kind of bribe not to interfere in their civil affairs.

He formed a league with Queen Joanna of Naples, who was bound to maintain his supremacy in Rome, in return for his promise of the crown of Naples. The Queen agreed to hand over to the Pontiff the



Castel Sant'Angelo, Ostia, and other Roman forts, and by way of acknowledgment for her crown, she overwhelmed with honors the Pope's nephew Antonio Colonna, who was then in Naples, and created him Duke of Amalfi and Prince of Salerno.

Martin V's conduct towards the belligerous Braccio di Montone tyrant of Perugia, who was then overrunning Tuscany and putting Lucca and other towns to the sack, was very diplomatic. He hated him most cordially, but as the Florentines, in self defence, were friendly with the *condottiere*, he too simulated friendship, and gave him the Vicariat of Perugia, Assisi and Todi, with the agreement that he should restore Narni, Terni and Orvieto to the Pope.

Thus in his convent-court, did Pope Martin slowly gather together the scattered states of the Church, from the hands of blustering *condottieri*, and weak feminine monarchs, against whom priestly craft was equally powerful. Meanwhile he was constrained to remain in Florence, for the antipope John XXIII was still abroad, and while that was the case, he could not safely take his throne in Rome. Of the happy termination of this affair, old Cambi gives a full account, so we will again quote him.

“In the time of Niccolò di Franco Sacchetti, Gonfaloniere of Justice for the quarter of Santa Croce, in May and June 1419, the Pope John, having been dethroned, and Pope Martin, Lord of Colonna, elected by the council; Pope John was put into prison to make an end of the schism. The Emperor made him pay 40,000 gold florins for his liberty,¹ and being

¹ Some historians say the Florentines helped to pay this.

free, he turned his steps towards Florence. Pope Martin, suspecting his designs, gave orders that he should be taken at Modena or Ferrara, but hearing of this from some friendly Cardinals, he came by way of Sarzana, and sent thence to demand safe-conducts from Pope Martin, and the Florentine Commune. These being granted, he, on May 13th, came as far as Gondo, where he lodged the night; and on the 14th he entered the city in state with many Prelates and citizens, and went straight to Santa Maria Novella, where Pope Martin lived. The court of Cardinals, Prelates and citizens being assembled, and the Pontiff enthroned, the said Baldassarre Cossa, John XXIII, fell on his knees, and then approaching the before-mentioned Pope Martin, he kissed his foot, his hand, and his mouth, and Pope Martin gave him his benediction."

"And Maestro Baldassarre Cossa renounced the Papacy, in the following words of self-degradation, reported by a hearer, Filippo di Cino Rinuccini, in his *Ricordi*. "I alone," he said, "called together the council at Ciudad; but I always acted for the good of the Holy Roman Church. You yourself know well that this is the thruth; I now humble myself before your Holiness, and congratulate you on your assumption, and on my own liberty regained."

He then gave in his credentials, etc., and departed.

There being such a multitude of persons in the hall, he passed by the sacristy, accompanied by most of the courtiers, and many citizens; and went to the house of Francesco di Ser Gino. "And so much peace and union was considered a miraculous thing,

for one could see that God was willing to clear his church of all the schism and discord, which had lasted nine years, while there were two, and sometimes three Popes at the same time," concludes pious old Cambi, unctuously.

The ex-Pontiff did not long survive his humiliation, for on December 21st of that same year he died in his house near the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. He made a will, leaving 20,000 florins in bequests for the redemption of his soul, and four of the chief citizens of Florence were named as executors. Vasari and other writers say that his tomb by Donatello was placed in the Baptistery by Cosimo de' Medici, but the Archives in which his will is preserved, prove that he himself provided for it.

Our *priorista* Cambi, confirms this; he says: "He left 3000 gold florins for his sepulture, in San Giovanni; the place was chosen after his death by the magnificent Signoria and their councils. There were 100 wax torches, and many citizens with tapers, and the Six of commerce, together with the heads of the *Arti*, and two rows of banners. Candles were lighted at the altars everywhere, and there were so many flaming torches that thousands of pounds of wax were used. The catafalque was placed in the centre, and round the corpse were eighty persons clad in black, and the Cardinal of three Choirs (*sic*) with his nephew (*Cardinale di tre Cori con suo nipote*) in full purple, and cape lined with ermine. The bier was placed in the choir, in the midst of the Cardinals; and our Signoria with the Cardinals made obsequies for nine days in Santa Maria del Fiore. The Com-

mune spent 300 gold florins, and the Captains of the Guelph faction 80 florins.

“Moreover Monsignore Baldassarre Cossa left in his will that those four exécutors should spend a certain sum of monney in making a rich vase to contain the finger of St. John Baptist, for when Monsignore Baldassare Cossa was Pope at Rome, it chanced that this precious relic fell into his hands, and for devotion he secretly carried it about his person for a long time. When he was deposed, he confided it to the Frati degli Angioli, to be given to the Altar of San Giovanni, and this they did; the said monks carrying it to the Baptistry, where it was placed in the beautiful silver reliquary, as Pope John ordained.”

We hear less of the court ceremonies during 1420. It is only recorded that this year Pope Martin gave the golden rose to Count Guido di Montefeltro, Lord of Urbino, whom he had secretly employed against Braccio.

We do hear, however, that the Florentines had in some way offended him, and on April 9th he prohibited the Archbishop of Florence from performing Mass, or allowing the bells to be rung, or the churches opened. Cambi says: “The city obeyed this order till the 10th of April, when at the first hour of night (i. e. the hour after sunset), a council was held, which judged that the Pope must have been ill-advised to proclaim an interdict. By somebody’s good management, and the plea that it would be unwise to make a disturbance in the city, the Pope was induced to cancel his anathema.”

The attitude of the Florentines in regard to papal excommunications had, from long custom, become very contemptuous. They had often gone on living their gay and careless lives with an excommunication weighing not at all on their spirits; but that they should manage the Pope so well as to get him to reverse an interdict within twenty-four hours, says a great deal for Florentine astuteness.

The historians do not seem to speak of this short anathema in April 1420, which our old *Priorista* reports so graphically; but it is possibly connected with the Pope's intense mortification with the citizens for their enthusiastic reception of his secret enemy, Braccio di Montone, and their cooling homage towards himself. We have before said that the Pope had to deal diplomatically with the fierce *condottiere* Braccio di Montone, and that on certain conditions he had made him Lord of Perugia.

At the end of February Braccio came to pay the due homage to the Pope. He travelled in great magnificence, and the Florentines received him "as if," says Muratori, "he had been a King or an Emperor."

He prostrated himself at the feet of the Pope, received absolution, and was confirmed in his Lordship of Umbria. The Pope then gave him a commission to subdue Bologna, and afterwards hand it over to him. Now considering the Pontiff had the previous year accepted that large sum of money to leave Bologna to itself, this order seems, to put it mildly, a little jesuitical. Braccio, however, was nothing loth for any kind of fighting. He marched to besiege

Bologna with 2000 horse, and numberless infantry; and compelled Antonio and Cambio Bentivoglio to cede their fortresses to the Pope, who forthwith sent the Cardinal of Spain to govern the city as his legate.

In July Braccio made another triumphant entry into Florence, like an Emperor, leading his captives behind him. There came in his train the two proud Bentivoglio kinsmen, to sign away their feudal possessions to the Pope. With them was the old Castellano of the Castle of Soriano, who for forty years had never given up his keys, though many Popes had reigned. He, poor old man, had to resign them in return for papal money, and then made himself a Florentine citizen.

It was at this time that some of Braccio's adherents set on the Florentine street-arabs to annoy the Pope, whose friendship they began to suspect. They commenced by sneering at the poverty of the tiny Papal Court, in contrast to the magnificence of their belligerent Lord; and the boys, who in the republic seem to have been especially impish, used to shout in the street, or write on the walls with bits of charcoal, or brushes dipped in dye:

Papa Martino
Non vale un quattrino

(Pope Martin is not worth a farthing).

Braccio valente
Vince ogni gente.

(Braccio the valiant can conquer everybody).

This foolish little rhyme acted on the mind of His Holiness like a blister, he could not forget it, and

kept on repeating it to himself till nearly wild with rage.

Leonardo Aretino relates in his *Commentarii*, that he was one day with the Pope, who kept walking up and down his room, angrily repeating this rhyme. Leonardo attempted to soothe him by enumerating the many benefits Florence had received from his stay among them, but in vain.

From that time Martin V reckoned Braccio as his greatest enemy, and set Sforza, another great *condottiere*, to besiege him, and if possible put him to death. Then His Holiness got much mixed up with the great tangle of the affairs of Queen Johanna of Naples, which indeed were extremely puzzling. What between a French husband who was separated from her in enmity; King Alfonso whom she first adopted, and then cast off; the King of Anjou whom she called in to take her part against him; and Pope Martin who was her friend when he wanted her to cede him the states of the Church, and her enemy when Braccio began to fight her battles, the Queen must have been distracted.

As for the Pope, Rome was now open to him, and Florence had become entirely distasteful, chiefly by reason of those irrepressible streetboys; so having seen Brunellesco's dome rounded off; having consecrated the new parts of Santa Maria Novella; and made the Bishopric of Florence into an Archbishopric; he and his twelve Cardinals departed on Monday morning, September 9th, 1420.

The Signoria sent nine of the first citizens (whose names Cambi gives) to accompany him to the con-

finances of the Florentine territory, and gave him 8000 gold florins for travelling expenses. Moreover the Signoria and the Colleges, the heads of the *Arti*, the Eight, the Six, and other magistrates, besides the Captains of the Guelph party with their standards, escorted him to the Porta Romana, whence the nine cavaliers and two hundred citizens followed him to the convent of San Gaggio, on the crest of the hill.

Arrived here "Pope Martin dismounted at the church of San Gaggio and causing all the nuns to be brought to him, he blessed them one by one, giving them a kiss on the head, above their veils. After having reposed awhile, he took leave of the Captains and citizens with a papal benediction, to which they replied: "God give you a safe journey."¹

So, in spite of small amenities, such as temporary interdict on one side, and impertinent boys on the other, Pope Martin and the Florentines parted friends after all.

¹ Del Cambi's Priorista.



4332 FIRENZE - LOGGIA DEI LANZI ORGAGNA

EGIDIO GIANNINI - FIRENZE

XV.

THE STORY OF CASA ANNALENA

(A. D. 1450)

In the Via Romana, opposite that gate of Boboli gardens known as the Porta Annalena, is a large house and garden, which, though of modern architecture, still bears the name of the older Casa Annalena. Near this are the remains of an ancient hospice: — a stone doorway, on whose moss-grown architrave is sculptured a saint bishop enthroned, and two coats of arms with the inscription HOSPITIUM RODULPHO NOBILIS FAMILIE. This doorway leads into what was anciently a cloistered *cortile*, though the old arches are now bricked up, and turned into tenement rooms and shops. It formed part of the Annalena convent, which once took up the whole block of buildings as far as Via Santa Maria, and included what is now the Goldoni theatre.

THE CONDOTTIERE AND HIS WIFE

From the Archives of the Annalena Convent we learn, that in 1426 a daughter was born to Galeotto Malatesta, Lord of Chiusercole, and his wife Maria degli Orsini of Rome. The child was baptized Anna Helene.

Poor little Annalena, as she was called, was very early deprived of her mother's care, and Count Ga-

leotto, being much occupied in wars and politics, connected with the family court at Rimini, often sent the child to visit at the house of her aunt Elisabetta dei Conti Guidi, wife of Rannuccio da Corvara.

The Countess Elisabetta lived in her husband's house in the parish of San Felice at Florence; and here the quiet little maiden became acquainted with all the *cinquecento* Florentines whose names are so familiar to us, the Capponi, Albizi, Guicciardini, who lived close by, and even Cosimo de' Medici, who was just beginning to show his power.

In olden times there were only two careers open to a well-born maiden, marriage or the cloister. Now the Countess Elisabetta was a very successful match-maker, and had already found a rich young husband for her niece Gherardesca, daughter of Count Roberto Ragunopoli; and though Annalena was not yet in her teens, she already began to seek an eligible husband for her.

Among the rising men then in Florence, was a certain bold Captain, named Baldaccio di Piero da Vagnone, Lord of the feudal Castle of Ranco near Anghiari, whom the Commune was at that time loading with distinction for his prowess in war.

Baldaccio must have been born with a genius for warfare; a taste fostered by his position as feudal proprietor, for certainly many of that class were little better than fighting brigands.

As a youth in his father's house, he amused himself by training a band of his vassals to make raids on travellers and neighbours. As early as 1430 he was condemned by the *vicario* of Anghiari to decapita-

tion and confiscation, for the death of a certain Tardiolo Marescotti, whose house he had sacked. He escaped the legal authorities, and with his trained followers defended his Castle, so that the sentence was not carried out. He moreover managed to make peace with the successor of the murdered man.

After such youthful escapades Baldaccio sighed for grander warfare. He increased his little band of brigands into a fine regiment of infantry, and started on a regular career as a *condottiere*.

He took service under Carlo Malatesta in 1424, but his first independent engagement was to fight against Lucca for the Florentines, in 1433, when Machiavelli describes him as "an audacious young captain, more expert than any other in the use of infantry soldiers." This style of warfare was new for the time, the usual *condottiere* army being composed of so many "lances," each lance consisting of three horsemen, knight, squire, and page. He did not hold this *condotta* very long, as on May 10th, 1433, a treaty of peace was signed between the Visconti of Milan, and the cities of Venice and Florence. The peace did not last long either, for the Visconti strained their yoke too far with the Genoese, and in 1434 the Florentines sent Baldaccio on a secret expedition to aid Genoa against them.

When once Baldaccio had signed his contract, he served Florence faithfully, often risking his life in her service, and gaining great victories for her over the Lucchesi and in the Romagna. But the occasion past, he had no scruples in selling his sword, and as freely risking his life for the Visconti, against the

Florentines ; or in sacking Tuscan towns and castles for Guidantonio di Montefeltro.

When nobody wanted him, he kept himself and his men in practice by sacking the castles and houses of any one who had offended him ; or by waylaying and robbing travellers. Thus on April 13th, 1435, he was condemned to death for having knocked a man down, and robbed him of his merchandize and 200 gold florins, as he passed Ranco on his way from Aquila ; and again in 1436 he was tried and fined 500 lire for an assault made by him and his men on a certain private enemy, Antonio Cocchi, nicknamed Boldrino. But Baldaccio had a wonderful aptitude for escaping legal authority ; he got off both accusations by pleading that they took place in time of war, when he was under orders.

After these little evidences of his seigniory over the Anghiari district, Baldaccio again returned to Florentine pay, and displayed such prowess that he won all kinds of civic honors in reward for his services.

He was presented with the freedom of the city ; and by a decree dated June 19th, 1437, the Commune gave him a house worth 400 florins. This was the house which was afterwards known as the Casa Annalena. It had formerly belonged to Pietro dei Bardelli, and was in the street leading to the Porta Romana. Moreover, the Commune decreed that his possessions should be exempt from taxation.

This belligerent young Captain had won many friends and admirers in spite of his doubtful warfare ; probably in those days a man who could hold his own by any means was thought worthy of respect. His

chief friends were the worthy Neri Capponi, himself a war captain, and Luca degli Albizi, both intimate at the house of Countess Elisabetta. She had only too good reason to respect the military genius of Baldaccio, for he had been fighting Malatesta Count of Sogliano, and sacked his castle of Spinello at the instigation of her overbearing kinsman Francesco Guidi, Count of Poppi, who had usurped her possessions in Mugello. No doubt she thought that if Baldaccio married little Annalena Malatesta, he would then be on her side and might win back her castle at Poppi for her. However this be, Neri Capponi and Luca degli Albizi agreed with Countess Elisabetta that Baldaccio would make an eligible husband for Annalena, and her father was quite willing to ally himself with the hero of many fights.

Whether Annalena's taste was consulted, we have no means of knowing, but it is probable she was nothing loth, for in feudal times the most gentle maiden admired the most ferocious warriors. The wives of Sir John Hawkwood, and Giovanni delle Bande Nere, are instances of wifely devotion to belligerent spouses. Neither do the *condottieri* themselves, however remorseless in war, seem to have carried their brutality into their own family circle, but often proved very good husbands and fathers.

The marriage contract of the little girl and the warrior was signed in the house of Countess Elisabetta on February 7th, A. D. 1438.¹ It is headed as the marriage contract of « domina Comitissa Annelena filia

¹ It exists in the Central Archives of State, and was published entire by Pietro Berti in vol. I, p. 42, of the journal *Archivi toscani*.

magnifici comitis Galeotti et de comitibus de Clusercule ex parte una; et strenuus ac magnificus vir Baldaccius quondam Pieri de Anglario comitatus Florentinæ equitum, peditumque conductor ex parte alia. »

The witnesses were Niccolò Valori, Piero Guicciardini, Luca degli Albizi, Neri Capponi, and Francesco Baroncelli. The bride's dowry was fixed at 2000 gold florins, of good weight and Florentine coinage. Baldaccio pledged himself to give her a "morgincape," according to the statutes of the Republic of Florence.

Then follows a list of the houses and possessions which belong to the bridegroom and the bride, and which are to be settled on their heirs for ever. Moreover Baldaccio is bound never to make cause of quarrel against his wife.

The contract was drawn up by the notary Ser Bonaguida Bartolomei, and Magister Niccolò Puccini of Pescia, judge and public notary.

The girl-wife took her position as mistress of Baldaccio's house in Via Romana, and the following year a little son was born to them, whom they named Guido Antonio. The child was a solace to his young mother when her husband was away in his frequent wars.

In 1439 Baldaccio was engaged by Guid'Antonio di Montefeltro to fight with the Visconti, against the Malatesta of Rimini, then allied with Florence. Here we have him turning his sword against his wife's distant relatives, and poor little Annalena must have been very divided in her allegiance, unless she had more common sense than feeling, and could look on

all his battles as mere matters of business. Probably during this engagement, he put her in safety at Castel Ranco; till, the skirmish being over, he calmly returned to Florence again with his sword stained with the blood of her allies, just as ready to fight on her side again next time. The Republic, to all seeming, gave him the same trust as before, but doubts soon crept in, and the next year's warfare brought him most disastrous consequences.

In April 1440, he was sent with an army under command of Bartolommeo Orlandini to defend the pass of Marradi (the key to the Mugello) against the Visconti's great general Niccolò Piccinino. His *condotta* included not only his own infantry, but 302 armed horsemen. He little thought as he marched this mass of men behind Fiesole, across the verdant slopes of the Mugello, and thence up the precipitous crags by the pass of Ca' d'Alpe that he was marching to his own destruction.

The pass of Marradi, which was so narrow that it might have been defended by a mere handful of men, was either wilfully betrayed, or cowardly abandoned by Orlandini, for, to Baldaccio's dismay, Piccinino's army came pouring over the hill. With Orlandini's army fleeing before them, they advanced, spoiling the country almost up to Fiesole.

Baldaccio was recalled to Florence, and placed before the bar of the great council of Gonfaloniere and Priors in the Palazzo Vecchio, to answer for his failure. He did not hesitate to incriminate Orlandini, whom he taunted with cowardice and treachery; nor did he shrink from insolent reprisals on Cosimo de' Medici,

who accused him of infidelity to the Florentine cause, and thereby he made mortal enemies of both.

Orlandini turned his mind to politics, and remained in the city, where he so glossed over his conduct, that the next year he was chosen Gonfaloniere of Justice. Baldaccio and his men were sent off to join Neri Capponi, in his brilliant siege of Anghiari, which drove the Visconti army back again, and saved Tuscany.

Then Baldaccio, to keep his troops employed, departed on a long raid, on his own account. He made a forced march to the province of Ancona, then crossed over and took the Castle of Suvereto, which belonged to the Lords of Piombino. He intended to follow this up by usurping their state, but his forces not being sufficient for this, he contented himself with sacking the Castle, taking the inhabitants prisoners, and exacting a tribute of 1000 gold florins from its Lord, Jacopo d'Apiano; after which he went off to skirmish against the Milanese army in the Romagna. The Castellano of Baragazza betrayed that fortress into his hands on May 23rd. Next day he took Bargi by force, and Casi by extortion.

Entrenching himself at Bargi, he made this part the centre of his manœuvres, and wrote boasting letters to the "Ten of war" in Florence (who had written to recall him, as the Lord of Piombino had complained of his unlawful attack) that if Piccinino came near his walls, he should get a worse beating than Baldaccio had at Anghiari.

All through June he wrote letters to the "Ten," telling of his repeated victories, and warning them to keep good guard.

Meanwhile other letters reached Florence from feu-

dal Lords in Romagna;— letters of complaint at their homes being violated, and crops destroyed, by this terrible *condottiere*, who had settled in their midst, and begging the Republic to recall Baldaccio.

This they did, but on his way home, in August, Baldaccio chose to encamp at the gates of Lucca, where he was not very courteous in his way of provisioning his troops; and the Lucchesi, then at peace with Florence, complained to the “Ten” on August 25th, 1441, that Baldaccio was threatening them, and that “his intentions were evil.” On which the placable Ten of War wrote to excuse Baldaccio’s arbitrary behaviour, and promised that at daybreak he should raise his camp and come away.

The wily general, however, chose not to go to Florence to be scolded. He marched his men back to Piombino, whence he excused himself to the Commune for not answering their letter received at Lucca; because he had left there, and taken their messenger with him, hoping he would have had good news to send them, but that things had not succeeded as he hoped. At length in September 1441, he was induced to return to Florence.

As may be imagined, it was a very hot-bed of reproofs for him. While his young wife Annalena, with her baby in her arms, welcomed him home, she must have felt that the danger he braved at his own threshold, was greater than the perils of the fight. She told him that his old enemy Bartolommeo Orlandini was now Gonfaloniere, and he knew he must prepare himself for the worst, for the Signoria would no longer befriend him. In fact, they were

thoroughly afraid of him, and felt that a captain so audacious and unruly as this one, must be got out of the way, lest he should turn his sword and his trainbands against Florence herself.

That the very highest authorities of the city should take underhand means to free themselves of an incubus seems incredible, but the Archives contain a tell-tale codex.¹ It is the domestic record of Francesco di Tommaso Giovanni, who was one of the Priors, and also one of the conspirators, and it puts the whole case before us.

Under the date of September 6th, 1441, Messer Francesco having noted the misdeeds of Baldaccio, in offending Lucca and Piombino, taking castles which the Commune held friendly, etc., all with evil intentions, goes on: "Lastly, as people talk against him at the street corners, and cry out for his punishment, seeing that he has no respect for this city, and thinks he may do what seems good to him, we, i. e. Curradi, Berardi and I, in the beginning of our term of office, talked the matter over with the Gonfaloniere, Messer Bartolommeo Orlandini (he who so weakly abandoned Marradi).

"On the 4th of September, seeing Baldaccio in the Piazza, he having returned to Florence, we again spoke together, and decided to sound the wishes of our fellow-councilmen. On Tuesday the 5th of the said month, after much discoursing, all of us except Cante (Compagni, one of the Priors) being in audience after supper, we with masked words agreed to consent to

¹ The MS. was found among the codices belonging to Carlo Strozzi, and is now in the Central Archives of State.

whatever the Gonfaloniere thought fit to do. The ill feeling against Baldaccio was most evident, although his name was not mentioned, for we had agreed that day to speak in a certain manner which we should all understand.

"Then on Wednesday the 6th, having ordered the Captain to send us a knight and eight soldiers, we shut them up in my room, and the Gonfaloniere sent for the said Baldaccio, who was in the Piazza. After about an hour he came."

Here we will leave Messer Francesco's narrative, and consider how Baldaccio passed that hour. Cavalcanti says, that fearing some plot, he hesitated to obey the summons, and went to consult Cosimo dei Medici, whether it were safe to go, adding that Cosimo urged him to do so. The nuns of the Annalena convent, however, tell a more romantic and mystic story. In an old book containing the annals of the convent, they say that Baldaccio was with his wife when the Gonfaloniere's summons came; possibly in the hour which elapsed he may have gone home to tell her. They both knew instinctively that the message boded nothing good. The story goes on to say "that he turned to a *Cristo* (Christ) which was in the room, and in mortal terror begged pardon for his sin, that the Lord bowed his head as he hung on the cross, and *it has ever remained so in our monastery* to the great devotion of us all.¹"

¹ I do not know if the miraculous Christ be the very early Florentine fresco which the then owner, Count Guittera de Bozzi, discovered beneath the plaster in an arch of the wall of an old room in the convent in 1881. It was mentioned in the Magazine of Art (Art notes) for February 1892, and was afterwards sold.

Whether the fateful hour were spent by the Count of Anghiari in being hounded on to death by the man who had most reason to wish him dead; or in having his soul saved by the woman who touched his wild life with her purity, there is no knowing. Certain it is that Messer Francesco asserts: "After an hour he came, and talked with the Gonfaloniere in the passage amongst the bedrooms. We had put the Captain's men from the Bargello into the small hall, and I stood at the end of the passage pretending to read a letter; and when the Gonfaloniere gave me the signal I passed it on to the men, and in a moment they had knocked him down, intending to bind him prisoner as they had been told. Now Baldaccio tried to defend himself with a dagger which he carried, and having wounded one man, and attempted to stab the Gonfaloniere, the others had to likewise defend themselves: they wounded him, and at the command of the Gonfaloniere they forthwith threw him out into the court. His head was afterwards cut off and put over the gate. The populace were delighted, and praised the deed, but afterwards, because it was displeasing to some, they changed, and said the contrary. However, they afterwards confessed that it was a work well done, but the affair was not publicly discussed, out of regard to those who were in it."

If it were not for this authentic confession by one of the principal actors, it would be difficult to believe that that grave and serious, that honored and respectable body of men, the Signoria of Florence, could have been guilty of ridding themselves in such a





FIRENZE - CHIOSTRO DELLA SS. ANNUNZIATA

treacherous manner of a man, whom a few years before they had heaped with civic favors.

Was the whole thing a private revenge of Orlandini for the humiliation Baldaccio had given him after his cowardly treachery at Marradi? Was it planned by Cosimo de' Medici who had also a bitter remembrance of the *condottiere's* bold tongue on the same occasion? and was Cosimo further egged on by his friend, the rival *condottiere* Francesco Sforza, who had always been jealous of Baldaccio's success in the use of infantry, which seemed likely to supersede his own more ancient and profitable hiring of "lances?" And who were the powerful "some" to whom Baldaccio's death was so displeasing that it must not even be spoken of in council?

Chroniclers have written and argued much on the matter. Some hold that the person not named was Neri Capponi, but he was away at this time of his friend's peril, having gone as joint ambassador to Venice with Agnolo Acciaiuoli to subscribe the articles of peace.

Cavaliere Passerini, that invaluable searcher of archives, has discovered a fact which may throw light on the subject.¹ The evening before Baldaccio's death, Pope Eugene had secretly given the warrior orders to go to the Marches and assault Francesco Sforza, paying him 8000 gold florins as earnest money. In a government where secret information was rewarded, it is easy to believe that some spy in Baldaccio's household had let out this fact, and that Cosimo, Sforza, and Orlandini, with Baldaccio's other enemies, had seized

¹ See *Archivio Storico*, serie 3^a, vol. III, Baldaccio d'Anghiari.

on it as a legitimate reason for putting out of the way a man who was terrible even as a partizan, but would be ten times more terrible as an enemy.

Certain it is that the Pope was extremely displeased at the occurrence, and the Republic sent their most persuasive orator Giannozzi Manetti to calm his ire.

The headless corpse of her warrior spouse was brought home to poor frightened Annalena, who was anxiously waiting to hear what the Signoria had said to him, and we may be sure she wept over it in a heart-moving conflict of love and grief, of horror, and indignation. The priests for whom he cared so little in life, were brought to pray with her, that his fierce soul might win its way into heaven, if so be that prayers avail for other souls than one's own. The tall candles burned around the bier night and day till they carried the burly body to its last rest in the Cloister of Santo Spirito, near the door of the Chapter-house.¹

The Commune persecuted him even beyond the tomb. His brigade was disbanded, and his possessions confiscated as those of a rebel. Among the list figured the fortress of Ranco near Arezzo, with three miles of land. Now this being his own hereditary possession, and not taken in war, Annalena on behalf of her little son protested against the forfeiture; and in such respect did the city hold her character, that at a meeting of the Signoria on February 27th,

¹ His tomb was marked by a shield with his arms, and under it the words "Sep. Baldaccio de Anglaro et suis." Some later Baldacci, wishing to claim descent from him, have now substituted their own arms and put "Vittorio di Gismondo Baldacci fece restaurare anno 1626."

1442, a decree was made, restoring to Baldaccio's widow all her husband's possessions, excepting those he had taken by force of arms; — "robbed" — was the term used, however.

Annalena was still mourning her husband when her grief was redoubled. Little Guido was taken ill with some mortal disease, and though she called in the most famous doctors in Florence, and prayed her heart out before that miraculous Christ whose head remained bowed before her, unresponsive, the little boy died, and was carried away on his open bier, his pale waxen face lying still among the flowers, while the white-robed children around him, sang their chants under the black banner of death.

Poor young Annalena was a "widow indeed" at the age of only seventeen, and she accepted her widowhood as a life-long doom, taking a vow never to marry again — indeed, poor child, she had seen enough of the world already, and was wise to keep out of it.

Her brother Fra Roberto, Knight of Jerusalem, came from Venice to protect her, and look after her interests. Having obtained the restitution of her property, he was very anxious for her to re-marry, and proposed a wealthy Venetian Lord as her second husband; but no inducements could persuade her to give up her pious purpose of dedicating her widowhood to good works.

She began by befriending solitary widows like herself, and took them one by one to live in her house, giving themselves up to prayers and charity. Charity in this case meant helping orphan children, and soon these twelve women, who had outlived their loves and

their joys, had gathered together a number of homeless children, and their hearts were occupied again.

Though only sisters in good works, and bound by no vows, they were looked on as nuns, as we see in a Register of deaths kept by the notary *della Grascia*, where the following entry is made under the date August 14th, 1449: "Una suora della Donna di Baldaccio, popolo San Felice riposta in decta."

As time went on the spirit of conventual life had so inspired these twelve "sisters" that they desired to become nuns indeed.

In 1450 Annalena went to Rome under the protection of her old friend Cosimo de' Medici, and obtained a Brief from Pope Nicolas V, dated December 12th, which gave her permission to receive in cloistered life any honest young girls and widows who desired to separate themselves from the world, and to profess the vows of the third order of penitents of San Domenico.

Armed with this papal sanction, Annalena returned to Florence, and her saintly household grew so full of nuns that she had to build a convent for them.

She again obtained a papal Brief (this time through the kind offices of the Archbishop Saint Antonino), which authorized her to build an oratory, and to celebrate Mass in it, allowed her the use of church bells, and gave her permission to build a convent. She then purchased from a certain legal dignitary Ser Stefano, di Antonio Vanni, three houses near her own, and the arches of the cloisters and church of Santa Chiara rose apace.

They were soon filled, for by 1460 there were a

hundred nuns in them, besides a school of children, and more space was required. A garden was bought for 100 gold florins, from Messer Matteo di Messer Ellero, and three other houses were purchased, on the site of one of which the church was built.

Fra Filippo Lippi painted, as an altarpiece for Annalena, a Nativity, in which he portrayed her brother Fra Roberto, as St. Hilary. The building had not long been finished when Annalena died in 1480, but the convent flourished, and was so much respected as to be taken as a model for others.

In 1636 the Grand-duchess Vittoria della Rovere, wishing to found one on the same lines at Faenza, begged that some of the influential sisters would come and organize it for her. So Sister Maria Regina Strozzi, and Sister Maria Elena Medici departed in state on September 28th, 1636, accompanied by a Canon of Florence, the Vicar of Fiesole, and two noble Florentine dames, one of whom was Donna Ottavia de' Medici, mother of Sister Elena.

Sister Regina Strozzi was elected Abbess at Faenza, and Sister Elena succeeded her.

Sometimes interesting events happened in the Annalena convent. In 1494, when Catherine Sforza, after her noble defence of Forlì against Caesar Borgia, came to visit her second husband's family the Medici in Florence, with her young son Giovanni, she found she was not safe even there. Her little boy, the future "warrior Medici," Giovanni delle Bande Nere, then six years old, was in greater peril than herself, so she dressed him as a little girl, and took him at night into the Annalena convent, begging the nuns

to keep him safely there till the evil days were passed, and the exiled Medici should hold their own again. He stayed eight months among the good sisters, and was their pride and delight. They little thought that they were saving such an important personage, for the child became not only a grand warrior, but was the father of Duke Cosimo, and through him of a long line of Grand-dukes.

Annalena's story is told, and we need not follow the vicissitudes of her successors. The convent lasted till the beginning of this century, when it was sold to Signor Luigi Gargani, who turned the cloisters into tenement houses, and built a Theatre and Arena in the gardens. The former was named after Goldoni, and was opened on April 7th, 1817.

The church of Santa Chiara is now turned into Schools of mutual instruction, so the whole place is secularized.

XVI.

A STORY OF THE OLD MARKET

(A. D. 1472)

The old market, one of the most characteristic parts of ancient Florence, now alas! exists no more. The modern Florentine buys his food at the shops, or in the prosaic glass-roofed iron market-house, while new shops, and quickly built stuccoed houses in streets and squares, have sprung up in the old market place.

Anyone who remembers Florence 30 or even 20 years ago, will not forget that "happy hunting-ground" for artists, where pretty kerchiefed damsels with their *sporta* (market basket), on their arms haggled over the mounds of green cabbage, red tomatoes and white beans; where the cobbler sat at his door with ceaselessly waving arms; the tailor on his bench was ready to mend any one's tatters, and where the love-lorn damsel would stand before the table of the public letter writer, blushing to dictate a letter to her sweetheart. The whole place was a mass of colour, and a rush of sound; every seller loudly proclaiming his wares, and every buyer furiously disputing their price.

But the most interesting points of all were the quaint old cook shops, with gleaming copper stewpans, and bright pewter plates shining on the walls, and rows of rare old majolica dishes on the shelves. White-capped men cooks might have been seen at the huge fire basting a revolving wheel of spit-roasted fowls or pigeons, scores at a time, or frying savoury morsels of *polenta*, or the fascinating *fritto misto*; and on the stone counter which formed the window sill were dishes of fish, frogs, and cuttle fish, of cutlets and steaks, all ready prepared for the cooking, as soon as a customer arrived to

order them. At the back of the shop was a cavernous arch furnished with tables and benches, at which customers were wont to dine or sup, or sip their Tuscan wine. And oft-times they grew merry over it as the heroes of our story did, and one of the famous "*burle*" (practical jokes), so dear to the old Florentine would be the result.

HOW MAESTRO MANENTE WENT TO INFERNO & CAME BACK AGAIN¹

One of the ancient *Osterie* or eating houses in the old market of Florence now vanished, was the *Osteria delle Bertuccie* behind the church of Or' San Michele. This was, in the end of the fifteenth century, much frequented by a number of choice spirits and wits who met there to dine and tell stories over their wine. Sometimes the quaint Florentine humour would take the form of a practical joke. Among the *habitués* Burchiello, the witty barber and poet, had been very constant. His shop was close by in Calimara and was the gathering place for all who loved a good song or a good joke. At the time of which we write, however, Burchiello's companions were such men as Davanzati the writer, Leon Battista Alberti the architect, a learned Priest named Roselli of Arezzo, and Leonardo Dati.

Now and then Lorenzo de' Medici the Magnificent, himself joined them,² and so far from being a restraint on their jollity it seems he not only took part in their jests, but originated one of the most tremendous practical jokes on record.

¹ Lasca, Nov. X; Manni, *Veglie Piacevoli*. Tome VII, p. 27.

² His evenings here inspired Lorenzo il Magnifico to write his humorous poem *I Beoni*.

Among the party was a certain learned Doctor, known as Maestro Manente, who was so witty and humorous that he kept the table in a roar. Lorenzo being highly amused with him, often invited him to supper at his Palazzo in Via Larga. Unluckily Maestro Manente had his faults as well as his gifts; he was presuming if patronized, and when familiar apt to become insolent. Moreover he was a confirmed tippler of the red *vernaccio* wine, which was the choice brand at that era. The time soon came when he appeared at the Magnifico's table uninvited, and then he spoiled the princely feasts with quarrelsome insults, but Lorenzo found that having once admitted him, he could not easily shake him off again. While he was puzzling how to get rid of this red-nosed incubus it happened one night at the Bertuccie that Maestro Manente having taken too much wine, fell fast asleep on the bench, and some lively young men who were of the party thought it a good joke to carry him out, bench and all, and set him down by the large shops near S. Martino. When Lorenzo went home he found him still snoring there, and the idea of a portentous joke flashed into his mind. He called two of his confidential *staffieri* (esquires) bade them mask themselves, and bring the sleeping doctor to Palazzo Medici, and dressing him as a corpse to put him secretly to bed, in a dark room on the first floor. The doctor was so heavily asleep that all this was done without his awaking in the least. Meanwhile Lorenzo, called a certain buffoon nicknamed "the Monk" who had a marvellous talent for imitating his neighbours, he dressed him in Manente's

clothes and sent him to his house in Via del Fosso (near the Pagliano Theatre). It chanced that Manente's wife and family were at their villa in Muggello, it being September, and near the grape harvest. In their absence it was Maestro Manente's custom to have his meals at the *Bertuccie* or in friend's houses, and only to go home to sleep.

"The Monk" found the key of the house in the Doctor's pocket, so he easily opened the door, and went to sleep in the doctor's bed. In the morning putting on an old gown and cap which Manente was accustomed to wear at home he tied up his thrôt and looking out of window entered into conversation with his neighbours cleverly imitating Manente's voice. He told them hoarsely that he had a painful lump in his throat, which alarmed them considerably, for there were suspicions that the plague was beginning, and the frightened neighbours whispered it about that Maestro Manente had the "*gavòcciolo*" of the plague. His brother-in-law Niccolaio the Goldsmith, came and knocked loudly at the door, but got no response — it was believed that Maestro Manente had become worse, and had gone to bed again—and was perhaps too ill to move!

A crowd gathered round the door, discussing what should be done. At this moment Lorenzo de' Medici rode by, and asked "what was the matter." On hearing that the jovial doctor had the plague, he dispatched Niccolaio the goldsmith to the *Speziale di S. Maria Nuova* for a capable nursing brother, and warned the neighbours to keep out of the house.

The magnificent Lorenzo however took care to ride

by the hospital, and intercepting this capable nurse on his way, held a long conversation with him.

The nursing brother entered the house, the people watching outside for news. He soon looked out from the window and announced that "Maestro Manente was nearly dead with the plague, but that he would do what he could for him."

Lorenzo de' Medici himself undertook to supply the brother with food during his vigil; and viands from Via Larga were daily sent up in a basket. If the neighbours had seen the contents they would have thought nursing an employment that required a great deal of nourishment. They little knew that Lorenzo was supplying two of his accomplices instead of the sick man. As for Maestro Manente's own larder, it being on the ground floor, his brother-in-law Niccolao made free with its contents, and merrily regaled his friends.

While Maestro Manente was supposed to be dying in his own house, he was in reality awaking into Inferno in the Palazzo Medici.

After sleeping a night and a day, he awoke,—all was dark. Supposing his friend Saccia and Biondo the broker had brought him home, he got out of bed to open the window. Strange! no window was there, nor any other familiar object! Unable to find his bearings he stumbled back to bed and feeling hungry called for help. The two lackeys had been waiting for this, and were prepared. Poor Maestro Manente's dazed eyes were startled by the sudden apparition of two unearthly figures dressed in white hooded robes with horns and monstrous eye-holes, like demons in

carnival time. One of them held a naked sword in one hand, a flaming torch in the other, his companion a tray with two flasks of wine, bread, a cold capon, roast veal and fruit.

These demons, at the point of the sword, obliged Manente to get up and seat himself at the table which they had prepared, and no sooner had his terrors begun to give way to joy at the sight of food and wine, than the sprites vanished as quickly as they entered, leaving him in the dark again. However, with two flasks of good wine and a capon within reach of his hands, he managed to finish his supper, albeit in the gloom of Erebus.

For several days life went on in this fashion, the demons brought his meals with a flash of sulphurous light to show him where the food was, beyond that all was darkness. Maestro Manente, who like all Florentines of the time, had plenty of superstition, had not the least doubt that he was dead and gone to Hades, but that as the reigning Plato was kind and had a good taste for wine, the pains of Hell might have been worse.

Lorenzo, having once begun his "*burla*" had to carry it out. His two lackeys managed to get the corpse of a poor man who had fallen from his horse and broken his neck, and carrying him by night to Manente's house, laid him out on a bier, dressed in Manente's clothes, and with a bandaged neck. Wax candles were burning all around him, the nursing brother stood weeping at the head; and the neighbours all came in to see the corpse. They thought the plague had altered his face, but no one doubted





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that it was Maestro Manente. Niccolαιο made the funeral supper, and sent word to his sister in Mugello that her husband was dead and buried, but that he was looking after her house, and she may as well remain at the Villa.

A change came over the spirit of Manentes' dream. One night the demons brought a suit of fiery red clothing which they caused him to put on; then they pulled a "Greek cap" over his eyes and leading him out trembling, put him into a closed litter on a mule, and away he was carried in the dark out of the Porta alla Croce, for long miles till they reached the hermitage of Camaldoli, where he was delivered over to the monks. The same comedy of demons and dark rooms went on here, only the demons were lay brethren to whom the lackeys had bequeathed their masks and fiendish costumes, with money enough from their master's purse to keep the poor doctor for a long time while they accompanied Lorenzo, who was called away from Florence on political business.

Manente's wife Brigida, with her children, returned to Florence in due time, and as Manni quaintly says, "having finished her weeping she lived comfortably." Indeed she consoled herself very easily, for in a few weeks Monna Brigida had married again, her brother Niccolαιο deeming it would further his plans if she became the wife of his senior partner Michaelangelo the goldsmith.

On Lorenzo's return he thought of his victim in the monkly dungeon, and sent orders for his release. So Manente, after being in the darkness of Hades for months, suddenly found himself in the upper world

again, dressed as a sailor in a big cloak and hood¹ and tied to a large tree. He soon loosened his bonds, and asked the first person he met where he was.

“Why, at La Vernia to be sure, don’t you see the blessed St. Francis?”

He went to the convent and craved hospitality. Here he ate a good meal, and astonished the monks by setting the leg of a Milanese traveller who had met with an accident, and next day he proceeded to his Villa. His *contadino* did not know him under the aspect of a sailor, and said his old *padrone* was in another world, and he had a new one now. In despair he asked leave to sleep in the *capanna* or hut, which most villas had, for the shelter of wayfarers and mendicants.²

He wrote to his wife next day, and sent the peasant lad with the letter. Monna Brigida was alarmed but her new spouse reassured her, saying he had with his own eyes seen Manente dead and buried, so the letter was nothing but a “*burla*.” He told the boy to say father must “kick the imposter out,” which the his peasant promptly did next day.

The news of his wife’s marriage made Maestro Manente only more certain he had been to the nether world and back again, but he felt disposed to claim his rights for all that. Accordingly he dragged his weary unused limbs to Florence, but in his sailor’s garb no one knew him. He saw his wife and child in Via del Fosso as they came from mass, and with a stare they passed him by, he met old companions

¹ This same dress, which seems very antique, is worn to this day by the fisher-folk at Viareggio.

² The *capanna* for beggars is still an institution in every hamlet of the remoter Apennines.

who did not glance at him. His Confessor at Santa Croce was away, so he went to the familiar Osteria of the Bertuccioni, but even his friend Amadori the host did not know him.

He next went home and knocked, crying, "Open the door wife Brigida."

"Who are you?" cried the good woman, putting her head out of the window.

"Your husband, Manente, come down and open."

"Oh no, no, Maestro Manente is dead and buried, go off now and play no tricks here, for if my husband comes it will be the worse for you."

The devout Pinzochera¹ Monna Dorotea, who lived opposite said: "My daughter, this must be the unquiet spirit of your first spouse, ask him what he wants of you."

So Brigida invoked him: "Oh, devout soul, have you some sin upon your conscience? Tell me what you want, and God be with you."

But when he explained, that he wanted her to believe he was alive, he quite failed to convince her, and she refused to open the door.

People began to follow him curiously as he went back to the Bertuccioni where he told Amadori to invite Burchiello and Biondo the broker to supper.

Burchiello, always ready for a feast, forthwith came from his shop at the "*Garbo*." It was October, and near All Saints Day. It was a time for dead souls to be abroad, so Burchiello knew this must be either Maestro Manente or his ghost. As he drank good wine with all the old *gusto* he inclined to the opinion

¹ A *Pinzochera* was a kind of lay nun, belonging to the third order of St. Francis, they lived in the world but under vows.

that he was not a ghost, and after looking keenly at him for some time exclaimed suddenly, "You are Manente, deny it if you can."

"I do not want to deny it," said Maestro rejoicing.

Amadori the host, and Biondo who had risen and were standing back in affright as white as sheets, were just taking flight, but Burchiello said "Don't be afraid, touch him, spirits are not made of flesh and bone, as he is."

Burchiello took his old friend to his own house, shaved and dressed him and next day took him to mass and to market and walked all over the city with him saying "Maestro Manente had come to life, and wanted his wife and his property."

Niccolaio and Michaelangelo went to law. They proved the man's death from the books of the *Uffiziali della Peste* (Plague officers) and the burial registers of the monks of Santa Maria Novella.

Maestro Manente with his witness Burchiello appealed to the Court of the *Vescovado* (in the Archbishop's palace). But the ecclesiastical judge went by the monkly registers, said the man lied, and sent him to prison in the Bargello. The council of eight (the Otto) were next appealed to, but the case was beyond them, so they called in Lorenzo but he was not likely to give them the clue which he only held, and the skein was never unravelled.

Burchiello was not far wrong when he said "this is some *trama* (web) of the Magnifico's weaving."



XVII.

A STORY OF THE POGGIO IMPERIALE

(A. D. 1530)

Outside the Porta Romana a grand and stately avenue of cypress and ilex stretches up the hill. The majestic trees, after centuries of verdure, are now being poisoned and withered by the smoke of a steam tram, little in harmony with the calm old-world grandeur of the avenue. At the foot of the hill are four ancient statues of the Latin fathers which count more centuries than the trees, for they formed part of the first façade of the Duomo, and date from the 14th century.

The avenue leads to a palatial building on the top of the hill, which was formerly the property of the Salviati family. It fell to Cosimo Ist by confiscation, and he gave it to his daughter Isabella, who was murdered there by her husband Giordano Orsini. In the next century it was bought by the Grand-duchess Maria Maddalena, and restored by her. It now forms a conventual school for the daughters of the Italian nobility.

Some writers say that the circle enclosed in front of this villa formed the lists for the double duel of which our Story speaks, fought by Dante da Castiglione and Ludovico Martelli, with the rebels; others place the site lower on the hill, near where the convent of La Pace once stood.

A PORTENTOUS DUEL

Florence had reached the climax of her evil days. The Medici, who in the time of Cosimo and Lorenzo,

hid under garlands of flowers the chains with which they bound the people, had by the beginning of the 16th century thrown off the mask, and the chains were revealed strong and hideous.

With Giulio de' Medici on the Papal throne as Clement VII, and Ippolito the illegitimate and debased son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, on the ducal throne of the city, these bonds were doubly hard. Heavy taxes were imposed on every class of people, and every kind of industry; the public property of the Commune was sold; and the public treasury so impoverished by the grasping hands of Prince and Pope, who both freely helped themselves from it, that the long-suffering Florentines once more arose rebellious, with their old cry of *Popolo e Libertà*; and had not the Prince been protected by the Papacy behind him, he would soon have been deposed.

The first signs of insurrection were quelled,—the time was not yet come.

Meanwhile a third oppressor was at their gates. The Duke of Bourbon came down from Milan with a large army to besiege Florence, but found it so well defended that he pushed on to Rome, where the Pope, after in vain trying to make terms, hid with his Cardinals in his castle Sant'Angelo.

The blustering artist Benvenuto Cellini, who was with them, turned fighter from his safe position, and boasted of prodigies of valour. The city was abandoned to the famous "three days' sack," which has been so vividly described by Guerrazzi.

"It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," says the proverb. Florentine wits were always quick enough



4044 FIRENZE · PALAZZO VECCHIO · CORTILE

EGIDIO GIANNINI - FIRENZE

to seize an opportunity; and no sooner did the citizens hear that the Pope was out of their way, than they found the moment propitious to rid themselves of the Prince. They proclaimed that the Medici rule was over, and constrained Ippolito de' Medici, his adviser Cardinal Passerini, and their followers to leave the city.

For a few days after this the place was a worse pandemonium than before, the three raging factions the *Palleschi*, *Arrabbiati*, and *Ottimati* were all striving fiercely for the mastery. But in the fall of the Medicean government the *Palleschi* were in the minority and went under; the *Arrabbiati* or Church party, powerful as they were in the time of Savonarola, were not so strong or so practical as the republican *Ottimati*; consequently within a short time Florence was a republic again.

Niccolò Capponi was proclaimed Gonfaloniere of Justice, with a council of eighty under him, besides the Ten of Liberty, and the *Otto di Pratica*. The *Arrabbiati* however gave much trouble, and Capponi feared being deposed, so willing to amalgamate the two parties, he, in 1527, called the "grand council" and proposed to elect Jesus Christ as King in perpetuity. The motion was carried with only eighteen negative votes out of a hundred, in the grand council of the populace; such a council as Savonarola himself had designed when he preached the famous sermon of 1487, and gave the citizens his scheme of a worthy government. The move was a politic one, and impartial enough to satisfy all parties; consequently after a second reading of the bill on June 26th, 1528,

the monogram I. H. S. was carved in stone over the door of the Palace, with the inscription: "Rex populi florentini, S. P. Decreto Electus.¹"

Niccolò Capponi thus thought himself sure of remaining in office but even his astuteness was not equal to that of a Medici Pope. As soon as his own troubles in Rome were over, and he had paid 400,000 scudi for his ransom, Clement VII sent an ambassador to the Florentines, saying that as "sole Vicar of Christ on the earth, it was evident that he alone had the authority to rule in Florence."

The Florentines denied this right, though they arraigned poor Niccolò Capponi for treason before his own Priors. He was acquitted on that score, but lost his rank as Gonfaloniere of Justice, Carducci being elected in his place.

By way of obtaining power to carry out his assertion, the Pope made peace with the Emperor Charles V, and as soon as the league with France was dissolved, he sent his Legate to Barcellona to treat with the Emperor. That treaty, ratified on June 20th, 1529, bound Charles to give his illegitimate daughter Margaret as wife to Alessandro de' Medici, *il Moro*, and to help that Prince and Ippolito to regain supremacy in Florence.

The city was thrown into agonies of apprehension, and all classes rose as one man to protest that they would forfeit their lives, rather than again submit to Medicean, Papal, or Imperial tyranny. *Popolo e Libertà* were again the cries. The gates were shut

¹ When the Medici returned to power they modified it to "Rex regum et Dominus dominantium."

and guarded. The armour-makers were the busiest people in Florence, except perhaps the *contadini*, who were bringing in stores of provisions from every villa. An urban guard was instituted, the art guilds had arms distributed to them, and every apprentice became a soldier. The young cavaliers who were trained in arms, were placed at the head of companies, and the patriotic sculptor Michael Angelo was dubbed Master of the fortifications.

The whole army soon amounted to 15,000 men, and its generals were Malatesta Baglioni, and Stefano Colonna. If the generals had been as pure in aim as the army, the result of the siege might have been very different.

What a fury of patriotism excited the young Florentine cavaliers and citizens may be judged by a few facts. On the 19th of October 1529 the Signoria made a decree that all the *borghi* (suburbs without the walls) should be destroyed, to afford the besiegers no ambush, and Dante da Castiglione, the fiercest patriot the city contained, formed a brigade of young cavaliers to burn and destroy all the Medici Villas. They set fire to those at Careggi, and Castello; also to Jacopo Salviati's Villa; and were going on to Poggio a Caiano, but this scheme was not carried out.

A number of Florentines, either friends of the Medici, or those unwilling to witness the destruction of Florence, left the city, but were cited to come back on pain of being treated as rebels. Three of the Captains (two brothers Orsini, and Giovanni da Sessa) were sent out with their companies to escort some peasants who were bringing in supplies; but

the escort did not return, on which they were proclaimed rebels, and Andrea del Sarto was employed to paint their effigies, with halters round their necks on the façade of the Mercanzia for the populace to jeer at.

After these defections, people began to suspect the faith of Malatesta Baglioni their general, and all the Captains of the army met in the church of San Niccolò, where after a grand Mass they took a solemn oath on the Gospels, in the presence of both Baglioni and Colonna, to defend Florence against her foes to the last extremity.

The indomitable young patriots celebrated this occasion by getting up on Piazza Santa Croce a splendid game of *calcio* (football) played by 25 cavaliers on each side; one side in white costumes, and the other in red. The prize instead of being as usual, jewelry or armour, was a calf; a more precious prize in time of a siege. And that the enemy might see how little they cared for them, the musicians were conspicuously placed to play on the top of the church roof at Santa Croce.

The enemy took their share in the fête by sending a few balls from their cannon on Giramonte; they fortunately fell harmlessly, but the musicians afterwards preferred playing in a less exposed situation.

The Prince of Orange, Captain of the Papal and Imperial troops, was encamped on the hill of Arcetri, which commanded the city on the south, his own headquarters being in the large Villa between Pian di Giullari and the church of Santa Margherita.

For a short time the north gates were still open

for the supply of provisions, but alas! 8000 German mercenaries marched down the Apennines from Bologna, and thus the doomed city was surrounded.

Such was the scene of war and patriotism, where the figures of Marietta and her lovers stand out as silhouettes on a lurid background.

Marietta de' Ricci was one of the Florentine beauties of the day. She was a daughter of an ancient Guelph family who had, for a century or two, held an hereditary feud with the Albizi, who of course were Ghibellines. Those factional names were now of little importance, but other feuds had taken their place.

Marietta had two lovers. The first was a gentle cavalier, Ludovico Martelli, with whom she had been intimate from childhood. With her, the childish affection remained always sisterly; with him, it changed gradually into a deep and abiding love.

The second one was an overbearing man who in love as in everything else, carried all by force, and had taken her heart by a stormy passion that seemed to be irresistible. This was a furious *Pallesco* (partizan of the Medici) called Giovanni Bandini. They had first noticed each other in the Duomo on a fête day. The church seems to have been a very usual place for lovers to see each other; possibly the customs of the time did not admit of young men visiting much in private houses, and girls seldom went out except to Mass, or on a *Festa*. A look was enough to kindle a fierce flame in the breast of Giovanni Bandini; from that time he haunted the street where Marietta's house was situated, glanced up at the win-

dows, sang songs to his lute beneath them, and otherwise so conducted himself that her family were much annoyed. It certainly was not pleasant to have this *Pallesco* constantly haunting the house of good *Ottimati*.

One night young Ricci and Lodovico Martelli attacked him in the street, and a fierce little skirmish took place, which might have ended in bloodshed, had not a feminine voice called on Giovanni from a high balcony, and besought him not to kill her brother.

Marietta's father now came forward, and forbade Bandini to show himself in the street again, on which he went home, threw himself on his bed and gave way to a fever. Marietta did much the same, she refused all the offers of marriage which her father pressed on her; she also refused her food, and wasted away day by day.

At length Bandini was surprised on his sickbed by a messenger, who bade him go to the Ricci's house without delay. Gaunt and ill as he was, he rose, and in feverish haste obeyed the summons. To his amazement Marietta's father told him that he had decided to withdraw his opposition to Bandini's marriage with his daughter, but that he must insist on one condition. Giovanni not possessing sufficient fortune to establish a family worthy of Marietta's rank, must promise to go and seek fortune out of Italy for a year or two, and when he had amassed riches enough to mate with her, he might return and claim her.

As many Italian merchants were at that time making large fortunes in Spain, Bandini decided to go

there, and win the means of calling Marietta his own. The lovers had some happy days together, and then Giovanni Bandini started for Cadiz.

A lucky star rose over his commercial fortunes, all his ventures proved lucrative, and in two years he came back a rich man, but an anxious one, for Marietta's letters had of late become fewer; indeed for some months they had entirely ceased.

The journey from Genoa to Florence seemed endless, so much did his apprehension increase as he drew near home. He found his father weak and ill, and so extraordinarily shaken by the sight of him that it was some time before the old man could explain that he had been led to believe him dead. A letter from Cadiz to that effect had some months previously been received by one of the Ricci family.

In a fury of impatience he asked: "And my Marietta?"

At this question the old man grew white with emotion: "What day of February is this?"

"The tenth."

"Then come and see your betrothed," exclaimed the father, and seizing his son's hand he half dragged him to the doors of the Duomo.

They entered; and what was the sight that met them?

Marietta pale, but as lovely as ever, was coming down the nave from the altar, in bridal robes, and crowned by the nuptial garland. Her new-made husband, the worthy Niccolò Benintendi, walked at her side, and wedding guests surrounded her. Only one of them walked apart, melancholy where all was

gay, — Ludovico Martelli, who had not been chosen by her.

A savage shriek was heard from the maddened man at the door, as drawing his sword he rushed on the terrified bride, but her friends were on guard, and the betrayed lover lay wounded on the floor of the church, ere even her step had passed out of it.

Marietta, after having been convinced of her lover's death in Spain by that false letter, had grieved much for him, but in time was constrained (as Florentine girls were constrained) to marry. She had no repulsion to Niccolò Benintendi, who was a good and worthy man, also a rich one, besides being one of her father's own party. Her illusions were gone, and she looked forward to nothing but a quiet and dull life — but alas! ere she had left the church a bride, all hope of peace was over. Her lover had come back from the dead, and her husband had bound her to him by a stratagem; — even her father and brothers must have been her deceitful enemies. The world seemed to be crumbling to pieces around her.

Of course Maria and Giovanni found means to meet each other; he, full of reproaches, and she full of grief and resentment at the falsity around her.

Equally of course they discovered that their love was by no means dead; and this led Marietta into meeting often and secretly with him whom she should never have seen again.

Martelli, who from afar was always keeping a watch over her, tried to save her name by checking these meetings; but he only gained the resentment

of Marietta, and the fierce enmity of Bandini who saw in him only a rival.

Bandini, though more in love than ever, was by this time maddened with rage, and when he went out with the Medici faction, and his father died from the effects of party persecution, Giovanni had only one aim and object in life — revenge. Revenge on Florence as an ungrateful city. — Revenge on the Ricci, Martelli, and all other anti-Palleschi, as traitors to himself.

Thus we are not surprised at his going straight to Rome, to offer his arms and himself to the Pope against Florence; nor at his appearing at the head of a company, in the camp of the Prince of Orange.

Ludovico Martelli was by this time reduced by a hopeless and unreturned love to that condition when death seems the most tempting issue. His life was useless to himself, but if it could serve either Marietta or Florence he would only too gladly sacrifice it for either. So he too volunteered in the service of the war, and was made captain of one of the city companies of militia.

Many a sally did he make, and bravely he fought in many a skirmish, but never yet had he come face to face with the foe he most longed to meet. This longing grew within him till at length after seeing Marietta become more and more pale and wretched, he determined on more decisive action. He called his friend, the burly knight Dante da Castiglione, into council, and the two decided to send a challenge to Bandini and other traitors,—as they called the

Medici partizans, who had turned their arms against the city which had nursed them.

Dante da Castiglione entered on it in a purely patriotic spirit, glad to fight any enemy to Florence. The real animus of Martelli, in the challenge did not appear, but he knew that Bandini would be aware he was fighting not only for his country, but for love.

So far we have taken the outlines of the story from legendary romance, though historians also vouch for the connection of Marietta de' Ricci with the famous duel. Varchi, a contemporary, in his *Storia Fiorentina*, lib. XI, says, in speaking of the challenge: "I will not reveal the name of the lady, conceding this to the nobility of her ancestors, and also out of regard to her husband who is still living, and knows nothing about these facts, so that it would not be fair that either displeasure or blame should fall on one who is in no way to blame." Varchi's friends however were less careful than he was, of Marietta's fair fame, or her husband's feelings, for Giovanbattista Bussini in his 18th letter to Varchi¹ lets out the name of the lady as "Marietta de' Ricci wife of Niccolò Benintendi captain of the Florentine ordinance for the Quartiere Santa Maria Novella, under the gonfalon of the White Lion."

But to return to our challenge. From this point we leave romance, and the narrative becomes historical, being taken from the documents themselves.²

¹ From a Codex in the Palatine Library.

² Published by Carlo Milanese in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, nuova serie, tomo IV, p. 2.

The *sfida* (challenge) was drawn up by Salvestro Aldobrandini (father of the future Pope Clement VIII) and was sent to the besieger's camp by a herald.

It is a long and wordy parchment, pompously setting forth that Ludovico Gianfrancesco Martelli, and Dante di Guido da Castiglione, send this challenge to Giovanni di Pierantonio Bandini and others of the traitorous Florentines, who were raising arms against their city in the camp of the Prince of Orange; challenging three of the "traitors of their country" to fight the two faithful Florentines — hoping to show on which side God, justice, and liberty preside. "*Ma con le nostre acute armi vedere del sangue vostro la terra tinta speriamo.*" (But with the help of our keen-edged swords we hope to see the ground stained with your blood) adds this ferocious challenge. It also names the defensive armour necessary, mail gloves, and a shield. Being three against two, the two disdain to say what arms of offence shall be chosen "let the three arm themselves as they like," they write.

The choice of the field is also left to the rebels, only with the stipulation that it must be of 90 *braccia* (57 yards) wide, and of the same length, that it shall be surrounded by a *fossa* not wider than a horse can leap, and that a *leccia* or cloth shall be drawn round it, as in the lists at a tournament.

If the field be chosen without the walls of the city, the challengers demand a safe conduct for forty persons, from two days previous to the combat.

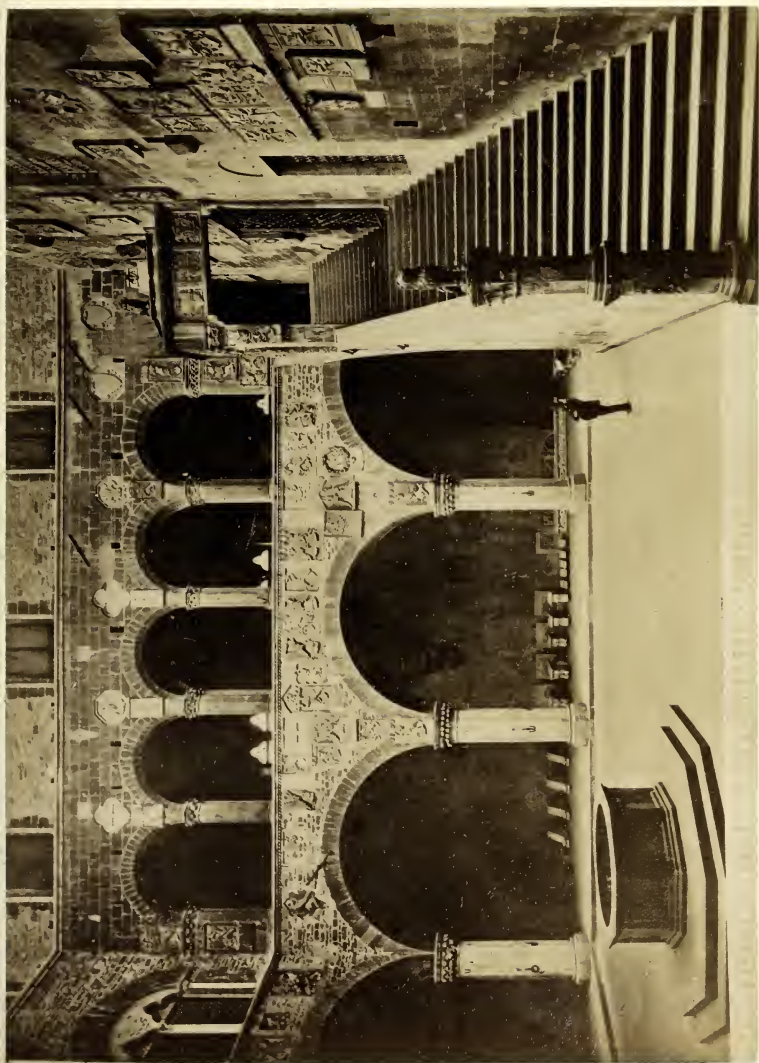
To this Giovanni Bandini writes back that "in calling him an enemy to God and traitor to his coun-

try they lie; he will sustain this with arms in hand, and that within twelve days." Moreover as he believes in his own right, might and arms, he prescribes much more defensive armour for his adversaries.

The two within the walls reply that the virtue of arms lies rather in deeds than in words, and seeing that Bandini denies his treachery in fighting his own city, they are prepared to combat loyally, so that his falseness may be duly punished. They name the 24th day of the present month¹ February, having taken the option of extending the date, as they have given their arms etc., to be prepared. They reject one of the three opponents proposed (Bertino di Vespasiano Cavalcanti), as not being a Florentine noble, and will fight two to two, or in single combat in different parts of the field, as the adversaries shall choose. This is signed by both Martelli and Castiglione, in presence of Niccolò Machiavelli, Lorenzo Bernardi and Niccolò Gondi, three captains of the Florentine host.

Bandini's response to this is very insolent. It begins: "Ludovico Martelli and Dante da Castiglione; Wednesday about the third hour of the night (9 p. m.) your challege was brought to me, — a long string of lies, where truly there is plenty of cause for lying, — but as it is not the custom of gentlemen to say more than is necessary, etc." He goes on to deny again the accusations made, and encloses the *Patente del Campo*, a parchment conceded and signed by the Prince of Orange, assigning the combatants a

¹ The 14th was named in the first challenge.





field near the convent of La Pace, outside the walls, between the Roman gate and the Orange camp in Arcetri.¹ It gives safe conduct and safe return to the two knights, their seconds and a suite of twenty persons, and further states that in accordance with the wishes of the *sfidatori*, two fields will be prepared, so that they may fight each in single combat with an adversary.

Two more parchments full of defiance follow: the Florentines cavalierly accepting all proposals, and Bandini being insolent and aggressive.

At length it is finally settled that Martelli shall oppose Bandini, and Dante da Castiglione will fight Aldobrandini on the 12th day of March 1530.

The Prince of Orange suspended skirmishes and attacks against the besieged city for some days. As soon as the enemy's guns were silent the Florentines breathed again, and forthwith began to be festive.

They treated the going forth of the two young men as a public spectacle. And a brave sight it was!

The party assembled on the Piazza San Michele Berteldi (now San Gaetano) and rode down Via Parione, and across the Carraia bridge to Porta San Frediano, a gay and knightly procession.

Four pages dressed in red and white satin, and riding palfreys with white trappings, preceded the cavalcade, followed by two trumpeters or heralds.

¹ The site is supposed to be where the suburban street of Dante da Castiglione now is, and might include the gardens of the two American sculptors Mr. Ball, and Mr. Powers, who have villas there. The name of the convent is preserved in that of the Villa La Pace.

After these came Giovanni da Vinci, "an extraordinarily well knit figure," who was Dante's second; and then Pagolo (Paul) Spinelli, "a well tried citizen and soldier of great experience," Martelli's second; and Messer Vitello Vitelli, a sort of "second to both" — (probably their umpire).

Then came the two heroes themselves, on two splendid turkish horses, *di meravigliosa bellezza e valuta* (of marvellous beauty and value). They each wore a casaque of red satin with sleeves slashed with cloth of silver. Their red silk hose were laced with silver, and on their heads were red silk caps with white plumes.

Behind them came six squires on foot, with red satin doublets slashed with white, and red toque caps on their heads.

Then followed their escort of brave captains, and tried soldiers, with a company of Florentine militia, who, having breakfasted with the combatants, were now escorting them to the gate. Beyond that point only the twenty persons named in the safe conduct were allowed to advance.

Hence they passed beneath the walls to the Porta Romana, where they found twenty-one transport mules awaiting them; for, determined to accept nothing from the enemy, they had brought not only tents, but provisions of all kinds, including "birds and fish of all species" with pastry and sweets. Even their drinking water was carried from Florence. They were moreover attended by their own priest, surgeon, butler, cook, barber, etc.

They drew rein at the enemy's trenches near the

convent of La Pace, where the lists were prepared; and we are told that "all the army ran to look at them."

The next morning, March 12th, 1530, the four combatants, entered into the two fields which were only divided by a cord, and were surrounded by German, Spanish, and Italian soldiers.

They were to fight on foot; and according to the rules, entered the lists in their shirt and hose, with the right sleeve cut up to the elbow. They had one short mail glove, and a long sword each, their heads being uncovered. The insulting advice as to defensive armour which had passed in the challenge, seems to have been equally ignored on both sides.

We have an official account of the duel in the signed report of the Prince of Orange, but as it deals only with the Bandini *versus* Martelli pass at arms, in which the Orange side won; and entirely ignores the victory of Dante da Castiglione over Aldobrandini, which in fact made the double duel end as a drawn game, we will take first a more impartial account.

Varchi (lib. VI) tells us that the adversary of Dante was Bettino di Carlo Aldobrandini, a pupil of the great swordsman Francesco or *Cecchino del Piffero*, brother of Benvenuto Cellini. This Cecchino had served in Giovanni de' Medici's black band (*Bande Nere*), and was a man who knew not fear.

Aldobrandini was therefore a practiced swordsman, but not equal in strength to that invincible Dante, who came on the field minus the fine red beard, reaching to his waist, which had hitherto been his chief pride. At the first sound of the trumpet, the attack was made simultaneously in both fields.

The impetuous Bettino Aldobrandini made a furious lunge at Dante, and in a few minutes had slightly wounded him three times: once in the mouth and twice in the right arm. Finding his arm becoming weak, and the attacks of his agile enemy incessant, Dante had recourse to his giant strength. Planting himself like a Colossus, he grasped his sword in both hands, and held it in front of him as his adversary made furious thrusts. The sword passed right through the young man's throat and tongue, and his right eye flew almost out of his head. He fell without a word.

Dante cast his eye on his friend in the other field, whom he was not allowed to assist, and saw that he was being worsted. To encourage him he shouted: "Victory, Martelli, Victory," but alas! Ludovico was beyond encouragement.

The Prince of Orange's report makes out that Martelli was a very poor champion indeed, but we must remember he was a biassed reporter.

After two or three rounds, Bandini wounded Ludovico with a thrust in the chest, and he retiring, invoked the Holy Virgin of Loreto, crying "a rest!" Bandini without a word lowered his sword.

We are asked by the Prince to believe that Martelli made a thrust while his adversary's sword was in rest, but this we may question as a partial opinion.

Bandini then began in earnest, and showered wounds on Ludovico, till he was bleeding not only from the head near the left eye, but from the left hand, and the chest; and he again called "a rest," imploring the aid of the Madonna. Bandini was doubtless the cooler

and more experienced swordsman, for while Martelli's thrusts were parried, all those of Bandini told, till at length Martelli being wounded again in the eyebrow, once more called for mercy, saying "*non vedo lume,*" on which Bandini scoffed deridingly: "Open your eyes then, — brave men don't give up so soon."

Three more passes were made blindly on Martelli's part, till Bandini cried: "Surrender yourself."

Martelli, fainting as he was, replied: "I surrender to no man but the Prince."

"In this affair there is no Prince but I," retorted Bandini haughtily, "surrender, or I will kill you."

"So Martelli surrendered, and it was near the door of the stockade by which the Orange champion had entered," concludes the report.

This veracious account is sealed with the seal of the Prince of Orange, and ends in a queer mixture of Latin and Italian: *Datum nel felicissimo esercito cesareo sopra Firenze a dì XIII di Marzo MDXXX.*

Philib. de Chalon

Bernar. Martiranus (secretary).

On a bier brought expressly from the city, poor Ludovico was carried back into the town; and such was the general consternation and indignation at Bandini's victory, that the equally great one of Dante da Castiglione passed almost unheeded. The victorious hero was annihilated by the failure of his less fortunate brother-in-arms. In fact he ignored himself, and passed all his time at the bedside of Martelli, who, in spite of doctors and surgeons, was fast sinking.

It was Dante who on April 5th brought Marietta to bid a last farewell to one who was dying for her sake; and his last moments were softened by her sympathy. Indeed her feelings must have been very complex, her love having been given to the slayer of the man whom she now stood pitying.

If Dante da Castiglione did not obtain his meed of glory at the time of his victory, his name has shone in the fame of it ever since. He is one of the brightest figures that stand out on Florentine scenes at the time of the siege, and even to this nineteenth century his name survives in that pretty street of Villas on the Poggio Imperiale, where he was champion for Florence and freedom.

Giovanni Bandini's life ended as it began in treachery and its punishment. In after years he helped to set Cosimo more firmly on the throne, by betraying Baccio Valori and Filippo Strozzi into his power at Montemurlo; and subsequently made himself so obnoxious to his patron by insolence, audacity, and by daring to admire the Duchess, that in 1543 Cosimo got the Magistrates to accuse him of nefarious practices.

He was imprisoned in the subterranean vaults at Volterra for fifteen years, and then removed to the Fortezza da Basso, where his victim Filippo Strozzi ended his days so miserably.

Here he lingered till 1568 when on August 13th he died at seventy years of age, worn out with suffering and remorse.

VIII.

STORY OF THE PALAZZO STROZZI

(A. D. 1531)

Few of those who walk down the Via Tornabuoni forget to glance at a frowning pile of dark masonry there; a palace with arched and traceried windows, crowned by a wide but unfinished cornice, and decorated with the world-famous iron-work by "Caparra."

This is the Strozzi Palace; for hundreds of years its inmates were men of power. They were Priors and Gonfalonieri in the time of the Republic; Princes during the Dukedom; they have been Ambassadors, and Nuncios, and Masters of the Mint. Their family portraits present a long line of proud and great personages, but of all that gallery, no figures stand out so full of tragical interest as beautiful Luisa Strozzi and her father Filippo.

Filippo was the Rothschild of his age: Popes and Kings came to him for loans. During the troubles of the siege in 1530, he lent the Republic of Florence 60,000 ducats, and Pope Clement VII some years later borrowed 120,000 ducats of him. His house and his cabinets were filled with precious works of art, and priceless jewels, which had been deposited with him as pledges for loans conceded. He lived at an eventful time — the transition of the Republic into the Dukedom — when it seemed a mere chance whether the Strozzi or the Medici should be the next rulers.

There were then three parties in Florence, The *Popolo*, numerous but unarmed, and lacking organization; the *Palleschi*, or Medicean, rich and arrogant, but not in favour with the multitude; and the *Strozzi* party, large and strong,

which, though not prominent, amalgamated all the moderates of the other parties.

Filippo, who led this faction, felt that his prospects of supreme power were growing day by day. But he had not reckoned either on churchly craft or his own vacillation. There was still, as we shall see, a Medici to pit against him, albeit a false one.

LUISA STROZZI, A TRAGEDY

I.

DUKE ALESSANDRO.

Florence was in a state of ferment on the morning of July 6th, 1531. The great bell of the Palazzo Vecchio was ringing *a stormo*, calling out the inhabitants of the city from every street and alley. Within the Palace was a ferment of all kinds of passions, the Gonfaloniere and the Signoria robing themselves in state, with anger, jealousy, and restive opposition in their hearts.

The cause was this:

The Emperor Charles V, who claimed sovereignty over Florence since the siege, had sent there Alessandro de' Medici whom he wished to make his Viceroy. The Florentines, rulers and people, *Popolo*, and *Strozzi*, had to put their feelings in their pockets, and give him a state reception. And how they hated it!

They had driven out the Medici over and over again, to resist their oppression, till only two churchmen of the family were left, and they had hoped freedom would come. But alas! the two were Pope



Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici) and Cardinal Ippolito, and what cannot a Pope and a Cardinal do? They decided that the Medici should rule in Florence, and if there were no real ones, then a spurious scion of the race would do as well. Here was the black visaged Alessandro, — natural son of Lorenzo Duke of Urbino and a black slave, — whom the Pope had sent to the court of Charles V, for courtly polish, and now he was to be Gonfaloniere of Florence for life.

He entered the city with the sound of trumpets, and clash of bells; and rode up the Via Calzaioli between the Archbishop of Capua, a German, and the bright-eyed Neapolitan, Antonio Muscettola, Minister to the Emperor Charles V.

Before him walked the city magnates, the Captains of the Guelph party leading the way, gorgeous in red *luccho*, but with heads bowed as if going to a funeral. Then came the Ten of peace, and of war, the council of Eight, and the Gonfalonieri of the Companies, one looking more wretched than the other.

Behind the Duke rode his satellites, Guicciardini the cruel, his chancellor; Valori the mercenary; and Ottaviano de' Medici; and behind them a crowd of arrogant *Palleschi*, glorying in the triumph of their party.

Among those nearest the Duke was one whose place should not have been there: Filippo Strozzi, — the leader of the opposing party, the husband of proud Clarice de' Medici, who would never own Alessandro as her nephew.

This was Filippo's first temporizing, he hoped by

seeming submission to gain the more power. In spite of Clarice's repugnance to meet the Duke, and her refusal to enter his house, Filippo compelled her to receive him in his own home, where he made a magnificent fête in honour of the Duke.

There was a sinister brilliance in the Palazzo Strozzi on this evening; lanterns at the corners glowed with light, flaring torches were in the great iron rings. The reception rooms, with their richly frescoed ceilings, were hung with crimson silk brocade, and lit with countless wax candles in silver candelabra. The carven cabinets glittered with the gems and works of art enshrined in them, and all the wealth and beauty of Florence promenaded the stately rooms.

At the entrance of the grand reception room stood Clarice with head erect and curled lip, her stern expression showing that, though compelled to bend the knee as hostess, her heart would never bow to the usurper.

At her side were her daughters, the little Madalena, who though only nine years old was already the destined bride of the son of Valori, the Medici general, and her elder sister Luisa, the most beautiful person and character of the times. Luisa was at this time 18 years of age, a lively brunette with wide forehead, dark expressive eyes, and a serious meditative mouth, which was always ready to expand into a smile.

While her mother received her friends, and armed herself against the chief guest, Luisa stood with her arm in that of her friend Caterina Ginori, a young wife whose story was to be as tragic as her own.

Caterina was emphatically a charming woman, she had large black eyes, a full and rosy countenance, a good-natured smile, and was frank in manner and speech.¹ She was a lover of art and letters, and was sought by Ariosto and other brilliant men.

A tall young man stood chatting with the two friends, and anyone could see that his eyes rested with special tenderness on Luisa, and that hers fell with quick blushes when they encountered his. This was Francesco Nasi, the only and carefully educated son of that upright and incorruptible citizen Alessandro Nasi; a young man of whom Varchi wrote "he possessed besides the gift of fortune, all those endowments of spirit and person which could belong to his years."

The three young people were bound in a special bond of friendship. Caterina had been as a sister to Francesco from the time when they played together as children, and was now the sympathizing confidante of his love for Luisa. Francesco was the chosen friend of Leone and Piero, Luisa's brothers, and Clarice allowed him to visit freely at the house. It soon chanced that Francesco's chief attraction was not Piero, but Luisa; and every visit on which he saw her became a red letter day to him. Luisa herself had only awakened to her feelings a few evenings since, when they had together looked over the shoulder of the great Michael Angelo, to see the pictures in the

¹ Caterina Soderini had been beloved by Luigi Alamanni, but the conspiracy against the Cardinal de' Medici, which was hatched in the Orti Oricellari, had caused him to be exiled, and she was compelled by her parents to marry Federico Ginori.

copy of Dante that he had himself illustrated, a precious book which was afterwards lost at sea.

"This is the page which gave me more thought than any," said the great master turning to the pathetic story of Paolo and Francesca in the fifth canto of *Inferno*:

"'Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona'

is too abstruse for ocular demonstration, while

'La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante'

is too terrestrial to show ineffable love."

Here the love lit eyes of Francesco, instead of looking on the page, fell involuntarily on the drooping face of Luisa, but the great master went on to say: "This line gave me the best idea of an everlasting love

'Questi che mai da me non fia diviso.'

Here Luisa lifted her eyes, glanced across the master's broad shoulders at Francesco, and met that gaze of his. A sudden light like an electric flash seemed to pass into the hearts of both. Francesco's face was transfigured, Luisa's eyes drooped, and she trembled so much that she caught hold of the master's chair for support.

They both continued to look at the drawings as Buonarroti turned the leaves, but neither of them saw a single thing more in the book, and when it was closed Luisa softly withdrew to her room to think of the new joy that had come to her.

They had now met for the first time since that momentary revelation, and each felt that a new bond

was between them, which separated them from the rest of the world. Francesco was just asking Luisa to grant him an interview on the following day, when Piero came hastily in from the antichamber with the news that the Duke had sent to excuse his absence.

"We are well spared the shame of receiving him," cried Clarice proudly, but the next moment she felt the insult of his refusal, to be greater than the disgrace of his presence. Moreover she knew it menaced danger to Filippo and the family, and seemed to see exile looming before them.

The ball continued, but it was a spoiled feast: the host went among his guests with a gloomy and forbidding countenance. Only Luisa and Francesco had some ecstatic moments as they glided among the dancers.

Alas, their innocent love was doomed to be as ill-fated, as that of Paolo and Francesca themselves; though separation, not eternal union was its meed.

Although they knew Filippo's ambition would lead him to choose a more influential son-in-law, the lovers let seeming circumstances lead their hopes. Madonna Clarice had always liked Francesco, and at this moment he seemed to be rising also in her husband's estimation. This was because the Emperor's ambassador Muscettola made an especial favourite of Francesco, and took him about everywhere with him. So the young people passed evenings together at the Strozzi Palace while its master paid court to Muscettola, and while the Regent Fra Niccolò, under cover of friendship, spied on all young Nasi's doings. They

met at the literary *conversazioni* in the house of Caterina Ginori, and sometimes passed a day together in the country.

One idyllic day of sunshine remained always impressed on their memories; it was when the Ambassador with Michael Angelo and Nasi accompanied the Strozzi family to their Villa, the *Boschetto*.¹ Here the lovers wandered in the leafy glades, made solemn vows of constancy, and saw no sign of the coming shadow.

Francesco waited a chance to ask Filippo Strozzi for Luisa's hand; but meanwhile plots were thickening around the doomed household. Alarmed by the disaffection shown on his entrance, Duke Alessandro left Florence two days after it, leaving the Archbishop Fra Niccolò still acting as Regent. This fanned the hope of Filippo that he might yet gain the ascendancy, but the Medici were too wily for him.

They made him ambassador to the Pope at Rome, where he was detained with flatteries and diplomatic discourses, which slowly and surely turned Filippo's influence to the use of his enemies. His ambition was appealed to, and ere long he found himself pledged to support the Medici rule in Florence, with the understanding that the Strozzi were to be a strong power in the new government. He may have had visions that when the Duke had, as he was sure to do, gained the hatred of his subjects, this seemingly subservient position would place him at the head of affairs.

¹ This Villa still stands in its woods outside the Porta San Frediano.

He wrote from Rome that due homage should be paid to the Duke by his family. Clarice, proud and disdainful to the end, utterly refused to enter the Medici Palace¹ when the Duke finally took up his abode there. Her son Piero, not willing to anger his father, temporized, by officially attending the Duke's levees; but he was so flatteringly received, that little by little he too let his ambition for the aggrandizement of the Strozzi family lead him into the meshes.

Francesco Nasi took alarm one day, when Piero spoke of the impending family marriages. There was Piero's cousin Catherine de' Medici, soon to come out of her convent to marry the Dauphin of France. His little sister Maddalena was to be the bride of Baccio Valori's son—another bond with the new government.

"Then," said Piero, "we must arrange for Luisa, it is high time she should be married."

Francesco's heart began to beat. "Have you—has Signor Filippo made any engagement for her?" he asked falteringly.

If Piero suspected his friend's attachment, his ambition certainly outweighed his friendship, for he calmly discussed the expediency of connecting the family with another of the existing powers, by wedding Luisa to the Duke of Medina Sidonia, one of the most dignified of Spanish Dons.

"Alas," thought Francesco, "this is not the time for me to ask for her—the Strozzi ambition would certainly spurn me. I must wait and hope a little longer." But other obstacles social and political were to come between them.

¹ Now Palazzo Riccardi in Via Cavour.

A love affair cannot be hidden from the eyes of a priest. One evening when at the Strozzi Palace before the return of the Duke, Fra Niccolò cast his keen eyes on the two young people chatting in a corner, and in a glance took in the whole situation.

Now Francesco's father, Alessandro Nasi, was in great favour with the *popolo*, being one of the leading *Arrabbiati*. He was religious, charitable, and a great friend of Girolamo Benivieni, Savonarola's devotee. Such a marriage as this would unite two strong parties, and must with caution be nipped in the bud.

"We must be unsuspected," mused the churchly Regent: "I must consult Ser Maurizio about this."

Woe betide the ill-fated lovers in whom the interest of Ser Maurizio was aroused. The Chancellor was a frightfully hideous man with a heart as deformed as his body. Varchi (page 472) says: "He was so frightful an ogre in appearance that it terrified one only to see him. He was always finding some new method of alarming people, and the torture of others was his favourite diversion." This man and Guicciardini were the chief instruments of injustice, used by Duke Alessandro and the Cardinal Regent. By their suggestion, spies were set on Francesco: the smallest word or action which could have a sinister construction put on it, was noted in the books of the dread Ser Maurizio. When Luisa Strozzi received a letter describing the private life at the Court of Urbino where her friend Giulia Aldobrandini was exiled, Francesco Nasi said: "Do not let Ser Maurizio read that," but Ser Maurizio already had a copy before it reached Luisa. If Francesco chanced to watch a street play which had



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a political significance, it was noted in Ser Maurizio's book as a sign of disaffection.

Even death worked against the lovers. Luisa was left motherless just when she most needed a mother, and Francesco lost his only aid in the family. While Madonna Clarice lay dying, her husband was entering on schemes which she foresaw would be the ruin of them all. He had advanced large sums of money to Alessandro to build a fortress.¹

"That fort will be his tomb," sighed the dying woman prophetically.

Filippo was in Rome at the time his wife passed away; some said he had injured his leg and could not travel. He wrote however to order splendid obsequies for her. All Florence turned out for the funeral. Black robed heralds on sable steeds preceded the cortège, followed by thirty prisoners released from the Stinche, dressed in black, crowned with olive, and accompanied by thirty couples of torch-bearers. Then came eighty black robed figures with the standard of Santa Maria del Fiore; the Capuchins with the cross of penitence; the Servites, Carmelites, Augustins, Dominicans, Franciscans and all other religious orders of monks with cowls, and nuns with veils.

Next the clergy of every church in the city, with the Archbishop at their head.

The dead Clarice was lying on a velvet covered bier, with her proud face still and fixed; all her children around her, with standard-bearers and servants to guard them. The church of Santa Maria Novella was covered with silk draperies, on which saintly

¹ *La Fortezza da Basso*, on the Viale Filippo Strozzi.

effigies were painted, and family arms quartered. Behind followed all that Florence contained of nobles and burghers, and there to every one's astonishment was the Duke Alessandro, wearing an outward expression of sorrow, but with inward rejoicing for the death of his aunt and fierce enemy.

II.

WEDDINGS.

The funeral over, the Strozzi family, after a brief time of retirement at the Villa, were soon absorbed in other events. Filippo, elate at having helped Pope Clement to arrange the marriage of his niece Catherine de' Medici with the son of the French King, brought her from Rome, chaperoned by Maria, widow of Giovanni de' Medici. She took up her abode in state at the house of her uncle Ottaviano, in Via Larga (now Palazzo Riccardi in Via Cavour).

Then began receptions and fêtes, the young girl Catherine moving proud and haughty among her adulators, with the airs of a queen. At this time Catherine was of middle stature, inclining to stoutness. She had an oval face with good nose and red lips, a short neck, small feet and hands, and a graceful carriage, yet there was something masculine in her face. One could see even then signs of that extraordinary force of character, which carried her so powerfully through her future regency of France.

The bride's *trousseau* was exhibited in one of the

large rooms of the Palace, and a more magnificent show was never seen. Not only were there numbers of every kind of garment, of the richest material, and sumptuous embroidered brocades, worked with pearls and cloth of gold; but the works of art, in jewels, *intagli* and caskets, in pictures and tapestries, were priceless. All the genius of the day had contributed. Fêtes were held all over Florence. The nuns of the Murate who had educated her, acted in her honour a sacred play—"the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca," and all the grandees gave balls.

At one of these entertainments Luisa Strozzi's unlucky star arose. The Duke Alessandro saw her for the first time.

In spite of his engagement to Margherita, the illegitimate daughter of the Emperor, he fell in love with all the fiery passion of his half African nature. His attentions appalled Luisa, who felt him so repugnant to her, that though she received them with the distant courtesy due to her prince, her manner would have discouraged a less ardent suitor. Francesco, who was always hovering near her, foresaw future trouble in every glance.

The Duke took Baccio Valori into his confidence, and got him to call at the Strozzi palace the morning after the ball. In the name of the Duke, Baccio made a formal offer of marriage to Filippo for his daughter, hinting that his Excellency was disposed to break off the engagement with the Emperor's daughter.

Filippo was placed in a difficult position. He and his family hated the Duke, and despised his birth. Luisa would certainly not consent, and he dared not

coerce her—yet to have his daughter a reigning duchess was a great temptation. As usual he temporized.

A few days later, Baccio confessed that the Duke no longer aimed at marriage, yet his pursuit of Luisa was more determined than before. So marked and distasteful was it, that Luisa begged her father to excuse her from attending any more receptions.

Filippo, chagrined and alarmed, was forced to see that the only way to save his daughter, was to give her a protector at once. Now besides the Duke, quite a group of pretenders to her hand had arisen during the fêtes at which she was the star of beauty. Filippo considered only three of these to be eligible: Francesco dei Pazzi a friend of her brothers, who had lost his heart to her two years before at a ball in her father's palace; Tommaso Strozzi, a distant relative; and Luigi Capponi, who had seen her for the first time as she was riding from their country Villa on that idyllic summer day of which we have spoken, and had been so struck with her lovely face and expression that he had thought of nothing else since. He disliked factions, but was, if anything, a *Pallesco*.

Filippo told his daughter that it was imperative on her at this crisis to choose a husband; and he laid before her the three offers he had received. She was wistful for a fourth name, but Francesco Nasi was not among the eligible. He was of the wrong party; modest and powerless he could neither withstand the Duke, nor aid the aggrandizement of the Strozzi. The perplexed girl begged for time to decide, and promised to give Filippo an answer on his return from Leghorn, where the Duchess Catherine de' Medici was

to embark. First she fled to her friend Caterina de' Ginori, and begged her to tell Francesco how she was placed, but to her distress she heard that the elder Nasi was dying, and his son could not leave him.

It was true; Alessandro Nasi died the day after, and with his latest breath he shattered the last strand of hope which bound this pair of faithful lovers. He required his son to swear that he would not be a traitor to his party, and would never ally himself to the Strozzi family, for he said that Filippo was not an honest man, and would bring his side to ruin.

"I know I ask you a hard thing, my son, but strong souls like yours must know how to bear anguish rather than fail in duty. Remember that what I ask is the sacred wish of a dying man."

The son would have protested, would have pleaded for himself and Luisa, but the father with his imploring eyes still fixed on him passed away, and Francesco sighed in his excess of sudden grief: Your will shall be my duty."

The monks of San Francesco arranged the funeral ceremonies which were largely attended, for the Nasi were greatly respected; but few in the large crowd knew that in the heart of the son following the bier, was a despair greater far than the natural sorrow for a father's loss.

Before him loomed the sense of a life-long sacrifice. To obey the dead he must lose the living, renounce hope, and perhaps also cloud another life with the agony of sacrifice. For days he wandered about the empty house, sighing: "Lost, lost!" while Luisa waited in vain for a sign from him; and every day Luigi Cap-

poni with his gentle courtesy and discretion was growing more and more into the esteem of her family, and even into her own appreciation.

At length Caterina Ginori broke to the girl the crushing blow that shattered all her happy dreams.

Those few hours of womanly talk left a mark on Luisa which never more was cancelled. Life must go on, but never would the same zest be in it, duty must be done, but no joy would help the doing—the sweet lines of youth and hope were effaced from her beautiful features, which never more rounded into laughter.

Filippo returned from Leghorn and pressing her for an answer to Luigi Capponi, she only said listlessly that she wished first to know him more intimately, and he gave in to her desire.

Days passed, the Duke once more insulted her.

Francesco was lost to her for ever, and hours of thought on her knees before the shrine of the Virgin showed her no way to avoid the persecution of the Duke, except by trusting herself to the loyal and generous care of Luigi Capponi, whom she truly respected.

On Filippo's return he again pressed for her decision, asking:—Did she love Pazzi or her cousin Strozzi?

"No," said Luisa, "if I have to choose from the three, it would be an injustice not to prefer Luigi."

Strozzi took this for consent, kissed his daughter, who sighed and smiled, and then he left her alone.

Luisa was not one to do things by halves; when next she met Luigi, she put her anguish aside, and

acknowledged him as the lord of her life. She drew her friend Caterina apart, saying: "You advised me to sacrifice myself, and I have done it, but you must help me, and promise that I shall never again see *him*." Then as if afraid of retracting, she hastily rejoined the party in the room where Luigi was.

The wedding shortly after took place in Santa Trinita. While the bridal party were at the altar a hurricane arose with hail and a strong west wind. Francesco was shut up with his grief in his lonely house across the Arno, knowing nothing of what was happening, but the wind brought him in gusts the echo of bells, and he asked why they were ringing.

"For the marriage of the Strozzi and Capponi, all Florence has gone to see it," said his servant.

Before the servant had finished speaking Francesco had fallen at his feet in a swoon. The *chirurgo* was called in, but it was not till evening that Nasi returned to consciousness.

The next day Francesco mounted his horse and rode straight to the hills of Camaldoli, where he prayed the monks to give rest and consolation to his broken spirit.

The early days of Luisa's married life were smooth and peaceful. Luigi, gentle and honorable as he was, gave her more and more a sense of repose and serenity in her new home, and grew more every day into her esteem. She was loyal to her husband, and he trusted entirely in her, yet that trust was to be their ruin. He never dreamed of the greater danger which was near them, but Luisa knew and dreaded. She had faithfully put Francesco out of her thoughts, but she could not put the Duke out of her fears.

He took every opportunity of meeting the bride, and each word and glance seemed to her an insult. She was cold as ice, and never spoke to him unless compelled, but this only made his determination more obstinate.

One evening he dared to make a call on her alone—hitherto he had brought with him some courtier or friend, but this evening he was unaccompanied except by his two unscrupulous servants, Giomo and Unghero, whom he left below.

Fortunately Michael Angelo was giving Luisa a friendly lesson in drawing, and seeing her terror when the Duke was announced he asked hastily: "Do you wish me to stay?"

"Oh! if you please," she ejaculated tremblingly.

"Be firm and courageous"—I am here, he said.

The Duke's face became dark on seeing him, and darkened still more when the imperturbable artist bowed and remained in the room.

Alessandro determined to sit him out, talked of all the little nothings which made small talk in those days, of Cellini's last medal, of Pontormo's paintings in the bridal chamber of Borgherini etc., but Luisa replied seldom, and Michael Angelo never moved.

At length Luigi returned, and accepting the Duke's visit as an honour to himself, did not observe the disturbed manner of his wife. How could she tell Luigi what it meant, and set him against the Duke, thus risking their exile and confiscation? she hoped to evade the danger by her own circumspection.

But her hopes proved vain. Even political circumstances were against her. Christmas came—a time

when the Eight of war published their lists of exiles, and sometimes used their powers of mercy in recalling as many of the proscribed as could be pardoned. Hundreds had been exiled after the siege, and the lists of pardons and proscriptions posted on the doors of the Bargello on New Year's day were eagerly looked for. Alas! there were few pardons but the latter list was full. Scarcely a family—except the strongest *Palleschi*—was free from confiscation of goods, or banishment of some of its members. Such a cruel list that the whole city cried shame on it. Luisa's heart was nearly breaking at the troubles of her many friends turned homeless and destitute from the city. She sold her jewels and wedding gifts for their relief, and showed her sympathy in every possible way. Of course Ser Maurizio knew all she did, and her very goodness threw her into his power, and that of the Duke.

Externally, that was a brilliant Carnival; the Duke and his courtiers got up all kinds of *corsi*, cars, masquerades and fêtes. The sound of horns and bagpipes, castanets and carnival songs was heard all over the city, drowning the muttered imprecations of the unjustly oppressed population.

Luisa kept out of all these fêtes, by pleading indisposition, she even evaded the ball given by Giuliano Salviati's wife. Then the Duke, delirious with chagrin, proposed that a masked ball should be given to celebrate a recent marriage in Casa Martelli, and that he would bear the expenses. The bride was Maria Nasi, a relative of Francesco's, but evidently less honourable than he. Francesco hearing from Maria

the circumstances under which she was compelled to give her ball, realized instantly the peril of Luisa, and set himself to watch over her safety. Though he had vowed to himself never to see her again, he determined to come masked to the ball, and frustrate any insidious plan the Duke had formed.

Some means had been devised of keeping Luigi Capponi from accompanying his wife, and her friend Caterina Ginori had not been invited.

When Francesco entered, Luisa was unmasked, and talking to her two quondam suitors Strozzi and Pazzi, now her loyal friends; but on the Duke's entrance they rose to greet him, and Francesco, calling all his manhood to his aid, slipped into a chair near her.

"Do you know me?" he whispered.

Luisa almost swooned at the unexpected sound of a voice she had so striven to forget, and looked reproachful.

"Luisa, listen," he said. "I am here for a reason you cannot blame. I come to warn you. Plots have been laid against your honour. Iniquitous people are seeking your ruin. As a brother would protect his sister I will if possible save you from perfidy."

He told her how the Duke had secretly got Benvenuto Cellini to make him a medal with her likeness, and how he had devised this fête and kept her husband and friend away.

Luisa trembled beneath her mask, which she had replaced as soon as the Duke entered, and had only time to murmur "I thank you gratefully, Francesco," when Ginevra Salviati, brilliantly, dressed as Diana, came and took a seat near her.



Ginevra was chatting to Luisa when her husband approached, and told her that some personage wished to dance with her, but Ginevra replied: "Let him choose someone else, I shall not leave Luisa."

After a slight matrimonial breeze, Giuliano joined the group, and began a series of fulsome compliments to Luisa, but on the approach of a very tall nun, Giuliano with a meaning glance gave up his place, and forcibly carried off his wife to the dance.

Luisa shrank with terror from that religious womanly dress, when she saw the dark evil features of her worst enemy beneath the veil, but she braced herself up to the encounter. With gentle denial and deference she refused to dance that evening, her husband being absent. The Duke tried flattery, veiled threats, insidious temptation, but she was firm, and his Excellency, foiled once more, feigned nonchalance, and was obliged to leave her alone.

When the fête had to be paid for, the bride Marie Nasi soon found that the Duke was not content with the result of his speculation.

III.

TRAGEDIES.

"Luigi, will you come with me to visit Ginevra Salviati?" asked Luisa one day.

"What, can you not even see a friend without me," he laughed, "what have I to do with an affair between two women?"

He was so unsuspecting that Luisa dared not explain, but she deferred her visit till she knew Giuliano was away. One Tuesday in Carnival she mounted her palfrey and went to Casa Salviati in Via del Palagio.

Ginevra received her with effusion, they chatted about Filippo in Paris, and the wedding festivities of her cousin Catherine with the young French prince, but Luisa was made uncomfortable by the way in which Ginevra constantly dragged in the Duke's name. Could it be that she as well as her wicked husband was in his confidence? It seemed so, for just as the thought came to her, the door suddenly opened, and the Duke appeared in person.

Ginevra laughed, "Ah your Excellency, we were just talking of you."

Luisa, pale and terrified, rose with downcast eyes to make her courtesy, when the Duke whispering a few words to Ginevra, that false friend with a hasty excuse withdrew, leaving them alone. Luisa instantly moved to the window which was open, and placed herself behind a heavy chair.

He came near with a caressing movement. "Why do you rise — what should you fear? you knew long ago that I loved you."

"If you move a step nearer," she cried with a proud menacing voice and her hand on the low window, "one step nearer, — I shall be in the street, and God will have mercy on my soul."

The Duke growled like a disappointed lion. "Fierce woman," he cried, "do you want to see your family exterminated? you shall see it. Your abhorred race are all iniquitous."

Luisa looked at him in sublime silence. Then the ferocious villain descended to threats and imprecations. Luisa clinging to the window bars did not take her eyes off the street till Francesco Pazzi passed by, and she beckoned him to come up. His was not the help she would have chosen, but necessity left her no choice. Up he flew, not seeing the disturbed looks of the servants on the stairs, who did not dare to stop his impetuous ascent.

The Duke had vanished, and Luisa was standing in the same attitude with a face like death. She thought a moment, and then deciding not to accuse Ginevra of complicity in the diabolical plot, she begged Pazzi to see her safely home as she was not feeling well. He dared not ask an explanation, and she, trembling still with terror, uttered not a word till she reached her own house, when she said: "I beg you not to speak of this unfortunate occurrence."

"It would be difficult to do so as I know nothing," he replied. But he had a keen idea of the situation, and did not hesitate to put his friends the young Strozzi, on their guard for Luisa. Their hatred against the Duke and his agent Giuliano Salviati, who did not hesitate to speak lightly of Luisa in public, grew daily in intensity.

One night after a jovial evening at the Medici Palace, Giuliano was riding away by torchlight attended by his squire. They had just crossed the Piazza del Duomo when two or three armed men rushed out from the Via dello Studio, plunged their daggers in Salviati's breast, and were gone. With a single groan he fell from his saddle, while his squire, throw-

ing away the torch, galloped back to Via Larga for assistance.

Though there was no proof of the identity of the assassins, suspicions were rife — and no time was lost in arresting Francesco Pazzi and Tommaso Strozzi, who were sent forthwith to the Bargello, in spite of very strong expressions of public sympathy. Ser Maurizio suspected also Luisa's brother Piero, but he managed to escape arrest by volunteering to join the Medicean army at Pisa.

Duke Alessandro who was being much fêted at Pisa, received Piero with simulated friendship.

Presuming on this, Piero one day took occasion to beg him to remove from Florence the disgrace of the unwarranted detention of Pazzi and his cousin Strozzi. Alessandro, becoming ferocious, accused him of complicity.

“ I — you suspect me? ”

“ Yes, and if you are still free to breathe the air it is only by my permission.”

“ Your permission! — then I will go at once and give myself up.”

“ You will do well, Messer Piero.”

As Piero was hastening away the Duke called a servant, saying “ Command Ser Maurizio to prepare a room in the Bargello ” then with a diabolical grin he added, “ but before you go to occupy it, salute Luisa from me.”

Piero's hand was on his dagger, but the Duke shrugged his shoulders, and entered the inner room whose door was kept by a Swiss guard, and Piero, with a fire of hate in his heart, had to sheath his weapon.

His evil star was in the ascendant. As he rushed down the stairs, the wicked Giomo exclaimed, mockingly: "Take care, Messer Piero — you are in peril of falling on those slippery stones." In the fall of the Strozzi, Giomo saw his own rise, and the fall of the Strozzi was near.

Piero was put in prison, and Ser Maurizio acting on the motto: « in vino veritas, » ordered the surly gaoler Maruffo to give him plenty of strong wine for dinner, which Piero warned by a look from the man's wife did not take. Ser Maurizio afterwards came to interrogate him, but learned nothing about the attack on Giuliano Salviati, except that at the hour it took place, Piero was in the house of his sister, Maria Ridolfi. Ser Maurizio went to the *Otto*, and begged an order for putting him to the torture to get more out of him, but not one of the Eight dared vote on such a measure as applied to a Strozzi.

The order soon after came from the Pope in Rome to set the three young men free, which was done, much to Ser Maurizio's disgust.

The three who had meditated much on the evils of tyranny, shook hands when they met in the courtyard, and that hand-clasp was a silent oath of vengeance. When they came out into the street, a crowd of partizans cheered them and escorted them home.

Their lives were not safe however, they had to walk attended by an armed guard, and dared not go out at night; for Giuliano was now recovered from his wounds, and was to be seen walking about lamely, with ugly gashes on his face, and vengeance in his heart.

Things went from bad to worse. Duke Alessandro, mad with hatred to the Strozzi, and chagrin at Luisa's repeated repulses, made up his mind to utterly achieve her ruin. Luigi Capponi was sent out of Florence on some state business, and with the assistance of the wretches Giomo and Unghero, and a ladder of ropes, the Duke made another attempt to carry her off.

A child, little Giulietta Ginori who was staying with Luisa, saved her by calling "thieves" and rousing the servants. There was a fight on the stairs, but the affair was of course hushed up, for it would have been dangerous to all parties if publicly spoken of.

Piero being privately informed of the whole affair, went to Siena, to call on his old friend Francesco Nasi to aid his revenge.

"There is only one way to save the honour of my family," said Piero. "Will you prove your friendship and help me?"

But when with a fierce exaltation of mingled honour and horror he referred to the death of Virginia, Francesco was too shocked to answer a word.

On Francesco's return to Florence after a journey in which the thought of Luisa and her danger seemed to turn his head, he found his house had been ransacked by Ser Maurizio's orders, and the door was watched. In his cabinet the wax portrait of Luisa, and a laudatory sonnet to her by Michael Angelo had been found, and taken to the Duke. The sight of these awoke all the fiercest passions of Alessandro, and he vowed that Francesco Nasi should die. Ser

Maurizio was called, and given ferocious orders to arrest Francesco at once.

"And torture him?" asked Ser Maurizio.

"We will arrange that afterwards."

Nasi escaped with a servant, and taking a friend's boat, rowed with muffled oars down the river at night. When next morning Ser Maurizio brought the news of Francesco's escape, the Duke's ire was terrible.

"Remember Cesena, and the quartering of Ser Ramiro," he cried, "if you do not bring me that man to-morrow, I will kill and quarter you, and hang you up on the walls of the Bargello to delight the Florentines."

The crestfallen Ser Maurizio retreated, but so giddy with impotent rage against a tyrant stronger than himself, that he lost his footing on the stairs. A few moments after, a deformed mass of bleeding humanity was shrieking at the foot of the great stone stairway, with a broken jaw, dislocated shoulder, and shattered ribs.

He was carried home on a bier, and here, alone, and in agony he died.

The Duke and Giomo came to see him, and his last blasphemous words to them were: "I shall meet you ere long *nell' inferno*."

That same evening, another tragedy was enacted. Luisa and her husband were dining with Maria Ridolfi; after dinner Luisa was taken so ill with sickness, that Luigi and Caterina Ginori called a litter, and carried her home by torchlight. The doctor Montevarchi was called in, but his experienced eye soon showed him what was wrong, and he knew that no

skill of his could avail against the deadly poison she had taken. She died at dawn, with her husband and friend weeping beside her; and much as they loved her, their grief was tempered with thankfulness, that the face now so calm and peaceful, would never more be convulsed with horror at beholding that evil countenance which had made life a terror to her.

Authors differ as to the cause of her death. Segni affirms that Duke Alessandro caused poison to be given her in revenge for her repeated repulses. Varchi thinks the Strozzi family themselves did the deed to save her honour.

It was not long ere her father followed her to the tomb by an equally mysterious death. After Luisa's tragedy, he and his sons were never friendly. Filippo made another effort to obtain power after the death of Alessandro. He tried to induce Cosimo to resign, but though not a religious man, Cosimo asserted that "The hand of God had placed him on the throne, and he intended to stay there."

Then Filippo Strozzi showed open animosity to the Medici, and putting himself at the head of the exiles, fought against Cosimo's army and the Spaniards under Vitelli at the battle of Montemurlo on August 2nd, 1537.

The exiles were conquered. Filippo from the top of the Castle-keep shouted out his surrender, and was with every species of degradation, brought back to Florence, where he was shut up in the very fortress he had himself aided to build.

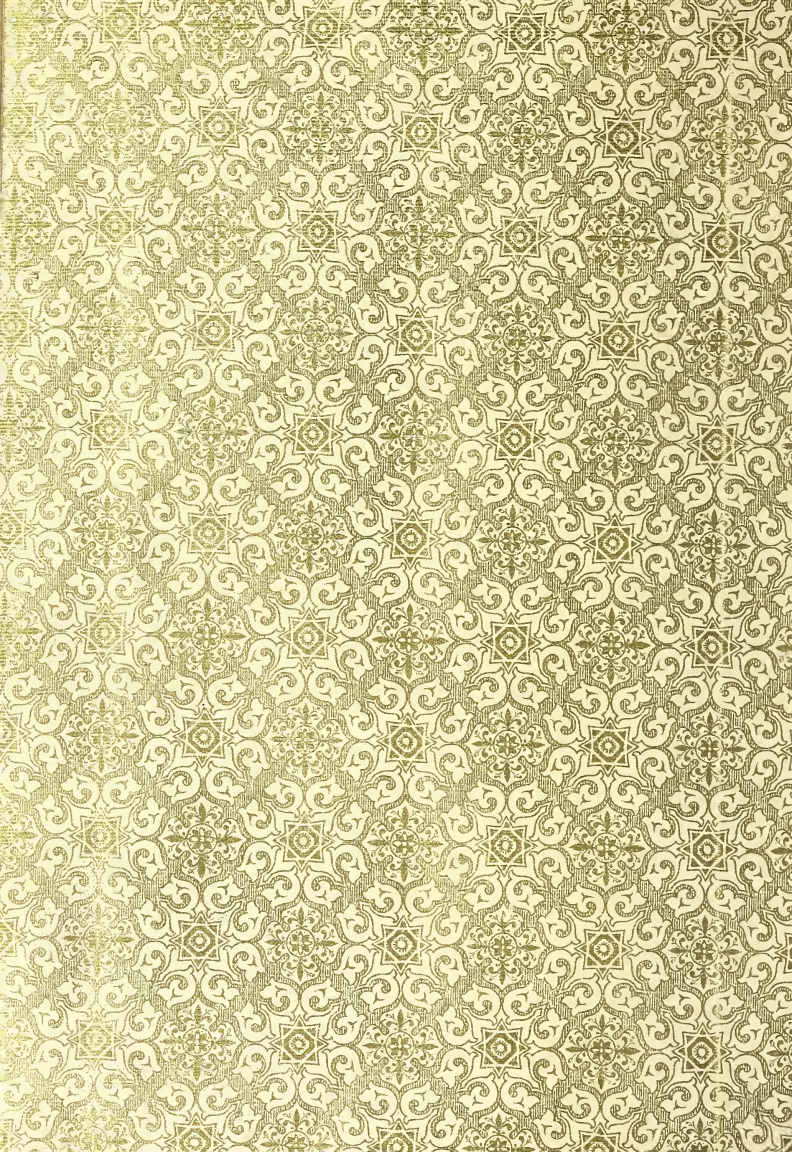
The dying prophecy of Clarice was fulfilled.

The fortress was his tomb, for here, on December

18th, 1538, he was found lying dead in his room in a pool of blood.

Whether he took his own life, or died, as many historians assert, by order of Duke Cosimo, has never been proved.

THE END.



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